DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 617 HE 021 094

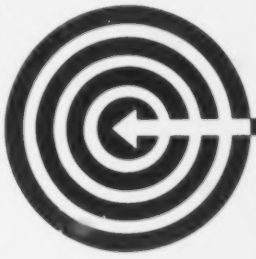
AUTHOR	Folger, John; Berdahl, Robert O.
TITLE	Patterns in Evaluating State Higher Education Systems: Making a Virtue Out of Necessity.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance, College Park, MD.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Dec 87
NOTE	90p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Maryland University, National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance, CSS Building, Suite 4114, College Park, MD 20742-2435 ($6.00).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Accountability; *Educational Assessment; Educational Quality; *Evaluation Methods; *Governing Boards; *Higher Education; Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Self Evaluation (Groups); *State Boards of Education; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Alabama; Colorado; Florida; Idaho; South Carolina; Washington; West Virginia

ABSTRACT

Higher education evaluation practices in seven states were assessed. Consolidated governing boards were present in Florida, Idaho, and West Virginia, while coordinating boards were present in Alabama, Colorado, and South Carolina. Washington State had an advisory board. For each state, a background paper on the state system was prepared by a knowledgeable local person. Interviews with 15-20 key persons who had been involved in the evaluations were conducted. The following procedures to assess state agencies and state systems are examined: self-evaluation by the state board, performance audit/sunset reviews, special study groups or commissions, and comprehensive reviews and assessments. Conclusions include: state boards of higher education should engage in periodic self-evaluation as a means of self-improvement and to ensure accountability to the state; the performance audit/sunset review should be attentive to broad questions of the boards' effectiveness in leading emerging state issues, particularly those related to quality and assessment; special studies can be a catalyst for change for some issues, but they are not a substitute for an ongoing evaluation process; and comprehensive assessments have been directed to obtaining accurate information about higher education performance and program effectiveness. 55 references. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED296617



NATIONAL CENTER FOR POSTSECONDARY GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

Patterns in Evaluating State Higher Education Systems: Making a Virtue Out of Necessity

John Folger
Director, Center for Education Policy
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Robert O. Berdahl
Director of Collaboration
National Center for Postsecondary
Governance and Finance
University of Maryland

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NCPGF

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HE 021 094

Patterns in Evaluating State Higher Education Systems: Making a Virtue Out of Necessity

John Folger
Director, Center for Education Policy
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Robert O. Berdahl
Director of Collaboration
National Center for Postsecondary
Governance and Finance
University of Maryland

December, 1987

The project presented or reported herein was prepared pursuant to a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement/Department of Education (OERI/ED). However, the opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the OERI/ED and no official endorsement by the OERI/ED should be inferred.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS
I Introduction 1
II State Evaluation Practices 6
III Self-Evaluation by the State Board 10
IV Accountability, Performance Audits and Sunset Reviews 20
V Evaluation Through Special Studies and Blue Ribbon Commissions 26
VI Comprehensive Evaluation at the State Level. 32
VII Conclusions and Recommendations. 70
APPENDICES
A ECS Surveys of Blue Ribbon Commisions and State Assessment Activities in Higher Education. 79
B Technical Advisory Committee Members 80
REFERENCES 81
TABLES
One 2
Two 5

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Assessment has become one of the leading topics in education in the 1980's. Calls from national and state leaders for reform and quality improvement of higher education began in the early part of the decade and have led inevitably to the need for more assessment - to see if reforms are working and improvements are being achieved. Current state and national interest in evaluation is motivated by the need to have better measures of how well our large, important, and expensive higher education systems are working. The effort to measure results is probably just beginning. This report is an effort to determine how evaluation experiences of the recent decades can show us where these efforts are leading state systems and the agencies which attempt to lead the systems.

Assessment is not new in education; in one form or another it is as old as education itself. American students are evaluated in each course, and credentialling and licensing exams occur at the end of many programs of study. Institutions are accredited and reaccredited through an evaluation process. Faculty are evaluated for tenure, promotion and merit pay increases. Research projects undergo peer review. Studies of whole subject areas such as medicine or engineering also occur from time to time. And, of course, appraisals are made of state systems of education.

What is new are systematic and comprehensive state efforts to measure the effectiveness and the outcomes of education institutions and systems on a regular basis. Although some state efforts predated it, the federal National Institutes of Education (NIE) Report, A Nation at Risk (1983), is generally credited with bringing the issue of (elementary/secondary) educational quality dramatically to the public's attention. The next year, NIE sponsored another study, Involvement in Learning, which along with several other reports raised the issue of quality at the higher education level. Those reports downplayed the federal role in education and pointed to the states, localities and higher education institutions as the major actors in educational reform. State leadership by governors and legislators was a major force pushing for more assessment. A recent report from the governors, Time for Results (1986), spells out the importance of ongoing assessment to stimulate as well as measure improvement.

Evaluations of state higher education systems, and of the statewide boards and agencies that govern them, are varied in scope, method, and timing. This is because statewide planning and coordinating agencies are a recent phenomenon on the educational scene, and they vary greatly from state to state.

Some are governing boards for all public institutions, some are coordinating agencies with limited regulatory powers, and others are planning and advisory groups. There is still uncertainty in many states on what these state boards, commissions and agencies should be doing and how they should operate. As a result, the best evaluation model for these agencies has been elusive.

The uncertainty about evaluation of the state systems is even greater. Higher education systems are so diverse, the cause-and-effect relationships so tenuous, that it is extremely difficult to say that a given factor should be changed in the hopes of achieving a different result.

Nevertheless, a great deal of state evaluating of one kind or another is occurring, and this study will try to "assess the assessments" -- to see whether certain processes seem more effective than others, and how, if at all, they may fit together. Seven states were selected because of the variety of evaluations they had completed during the last decade. The evaluations were examined through interviews, document reviews, and in other ways reported later. The intent is not to look at detailed institutional level evaluation processes, though it will be seen that such activity is critical to the success of state level assessments.

The Empirical Basis for this Study

Because more was needed than a mere reading and review of various state evaluation documents, field visits were made to the seven subject states. With no thought of deriving a "scientific sample," the seven states were chosen to represent not only a variety of modes of evaluation but also different forms of statewide coordination and different regions of the country.

Table One displays the seven states visited, their mode of state coordination and the evaluations relevant to this research. It will be seen that three of the seven have consolidated governing boards, three have coordinating boards, and one had an advisory board at the time of the study.

Consolidated Governing Board	Coordinating Board	Advisory Board
Florida	Alabama	Washington
Idaho	Colorado	
West Virginia	South Carolina	

Table Two represents the different modes of evaluations used by the states. The list of studies will reveal seven done by blue ribbon commissions, eight by out-of-state consultants, two

TABLE ONE

State	Type of State Board	Relevant Evaluations
Washington	Advisory (Through 1986) Regulatory Coordinating since	1. Toward A New Beginning: Balancing Local Control with State Coordination and Governance (Bowen and Glenny), 1984. 2. Sunset Program and Fiscal Review of Council on Post-secondary Education, 1984. Report by the Legislative Budget Bureau 3. Citizens' Committee with representation from both the House and Senate. Jan. '85 report The Paramount Duty
Alabama	Regulatory Coordinating	1. 1st (1975), 2nd (1979) 3rd (1983) and 4th (1987) Quadrennial Evaluations of ACHE 2. 1983 Report of Council of Twenty One. Challenge-Obligation-Opportunity, The Imperative for Excellence in Higher Education
Colorado	Regulatory Coordinating	1. Sunset Review - Committee on the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, June 1982. 2. Report of the Higher Education Committee, January 1985
South Carolina	Regulatory Coordinating	1. Legislative Audit Council Report, 1978 2. South Carolina Master Plan for H.E., 1980 3. AVA Report to the Commission, Feb. 1986, Higher Education in S.C.: An Agenda for the Future 4. The Cutting Edge: Higher Education's Initiatives for Excellence. Report of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Florida	Consolidated Governing	1. AED study A Call to Action, 1979 2. Report and Recommendations of the Joint Legislative-Executive Commission on Postsecondary Education, 1980 3. Master Plan for Florida Postsecondary Education, 1982 4. Regents Evaluative Criteria on the Delivery System, 1983 and follow-ups, 1984-85 5. A Path to Excellence in Public Higher Education in Florida, Regents' Study Commission on Funding for Excellence, 1985

TABLE ONE (Continued)

State	Type of State Board	Relevant Evaluations
West Virginia	Consolidated Governing	1. Support, Performance, and Protection of Higher Education in West Virginia, Consultant (AED) study, 1979 2. Performance Audit - Sunset Review, 1984 3. Agenda for Action - Master Plan, 1985-90 4. Higher Education Study Commission Report, 1987
Idaho	Consolidated Governing	1. The Future of Higher Education in Idaho, 1983 (ECS) 2. Higher Education in Idaho: A Plan for the Future. (IACI), 1983 3. Northwest Regional Report, 1984 4. Strategic Plan, 1986. Directions for Higher Education Idaho: The Next Five Years. 5. Ad hoc Committee on H.E. (joint legislative interim committees) to examine state governance and community colleges, 1985

TABLE TWO

STATE HIGHER EDUCATION BOARD	BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION	OUT OF STATE CONSULTANTS	SUNSET LEGISLATIVE AUDIT	LEGISLATIVE REPORT
	Washington, 1985 The Paramount Duty Washington State Temporary Committee on Educational Policies, Structure, & Management	Washington, 1984 Toward a New Beginning: Balancing Local Control with State Coordination and Governance (Cleary and Bowen)	Washington, 1984 Sunset Program and Fiscal Review of Council on Post-secondary Education	
	Alabama, 1975, 1979 1st and 2nd Quadrennial Evaluation Commission Reports Alabama, 1983 Challenge - Obligation - Opportunity: The Imperative for Excellence in Higher Education Council of 21	Alabama 1983, 1987 3rd and 4th Quadrennial Education Commission Reports		
South Carolina, 1980 South Carolina Master Plan for Higher Education		South Carolina, 1986 Higher Education in South Carolina: An Agenda for the Future (AVA)	South Carolina, 1978 Legislative Audit	
Florida, 1982 The Master Plan for Florida Post-secondary Education	Florida, 1980 Report and Recommendations of the Joint Legislative and Executive Committee on Post-secondary Education Florida, 1985 A Path to Excellence in Public Higher Education in Florida	Florida, 1979 A Call to Action (AED)		
West Virginia, 1985 Agenda for Action 1985-90: Master Plan of Goals and Service for Public Higher Education in West Virginia		West Virginia, 1979 Support, Performance and Protection of Higher Education in West Virginia (AED)	West Virginia, 1984 Performance Audit of the West Virginia Board of Regents in conjunction with Sunset review	
Idaho, 1986 Strategic Plan Directions for Higher Education in Idaho: The Next Five Years	Idaho, 1983 Higher Education in Idaho: A Plan for the Future (IACI)	Idaho, 1982 The Future of Higher Education in Idaho (SCS) Idaho, 1984 Northwest Regional Accreditation Report		Idaho, 1985 Ad Hoc Committee on Higher Education to examine state governance and community colleges
			Colorado, 1982 Sunset Review, Committee on the Colorado Commission of Higher Education	Colorado, 1985 Report of the Higher Education Committee

by legislative committees, four by state legislative performance audit or sunset reviews, four by a statewide board, and one by a regional accrediting association. Clearly a great deal of evaluation has taken place - - without mentioning the studies undertaken in the other 43 states! (In Appendix A a brief annotation is given of three recent surveys by the Education Commission of the States regarding blue ribbon commissions and state assessment activities in higher education.)

For each state, a background paper on the state system was prepared by a knowledgeable local person. These reports were extremely useful. They gave background on issues, actors, events and contexts which enabled the authors to gain an understanding of the particular characteristics of that state's situation. The understanding was then tested by interviews with 15-20 key actors who had been involved in the evaluations.

The state reporters were:

Alabama - Dr. Elizabeth French, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education for nine years and coordinator for three of the four commission evaluations mandated by the legislature.

Colorado - Dr. Charles Manning, Deputy Director of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education; he served with the prior commission for about a decade.

Florida - Vice Chancellor Roy McTarnaghan, who had been Executive Director of the Virginia Commission on Higher Education before coming to Florida in his present position about ten years previously.

Idaho - Dr. Milton Small, who was Executive Director of the State Board of Education from 1972 to 1983.

South Carolina - Mr. Alan Krech, who has been a staff member of the South Carolina Commission since 1970.

Washington - Dr. William Zumeta, a Professor of Public Administration at the University of Washington, who has studied and written about state government and higher education.

West Virginia - Dr. Harry Hefflin, former President of Glenville State College, former Vice President and Acting President of West Virginia University.

In five of the seven states the reporter was an active leader/participant in the state agency; in one state, the reporter was retired from institutional leadership. Only Professor Zumeta could be considered a fully neutral observer. All the observers were knowledgeable about the studies being

researched and they made the effort to be as objective as possible. Their accounts were checked against the reports of other participant observers.

The interviewees were representative of the following categories:

- executive branch

- legislators and staff

- state board of higher education lay members and staff

- leaders from public and private colleges and universities

- selected lay citizens (e.g., members of blue ribbon commissions) and journalists

Alabama and Florida were visited by both authors to set common research procedures; the remaining five were surveyed by the authors separately, but accompanied by a colleague to assist. In Colorado, Aims McGuinness assisted in interviews and discussing background. Assistance with interviews was provided by: William Zumeta in Washington, Gordon Van de Water in Idaho, Steve Smartt in South Carolina and Susan Studds in West Virginia.

In each state, multiple studies were reviewed, and while the general outline of the issues to be covered in interviews was the same for all states, questions were tailored to the particular state and person at hand. The interviews were conducted off-the-record to preserve and inspire maximum candor.

Information collected in the interviews included a description of the evaluation process, why it was initiated, who performed it, what questions the evaluation sought to address, what answers were proposed, and what recommendations were developed. The political climate was explored, and interviewees also addressed the short- and long-term impacts they observed. They were asked to give opinions on how the evaluation process should be conducted, who should be involved, what the proper timing would be and what questions would be most important.

A small Technical Advisory Committee, shown in Appendix B, reviewed this study design early in the process and then looked at tentative findings. In addition, issues were discussed with small groups from governors' staffs, legislators, state higher education executive officers, and institutional presidents.

Conclusions and observations collected by these methods are reported in the following chapters as input from "respondents" or "interviewees." Each chapter contains examples of the subject

evaluation processes and the respondents' interpretations which helped establish patterns and form our recommendations.

A Preview

The research for this report led to four major conclusions. Chapters III through VI will elaborate on each conclusion and the evidence which formed it. They are previewed here in ascending order of importance and in descending order of our certainty about them.

1. State boards of higher education should engage in periodic self-evaluation as a means of self-improvement and of ensuring accountability to the state.

2. Whether or not such board evaluations take place, some states have formally mandated performance audits or sunset reviews which include the state agency or board for higher education. Such audits/reviews normally focus too narrowly on legislative intent and pay insufficient attention to the broader questions of the boards' effectiveness in leading emerging state issues, particularly those related to quality and assessment.

3. While some states have attempted to address these broader issues through the use of special or blue ribbon commissions, out-of-state consultants and/or ad hoc or standing legislative committees, only limited success can be proven for these processes. It is recommended that such processes be undertaken periodically rather than used only at a time of crisis when the agenda of radical restructuring and/or change of key personnel can create a threatening context for the proposed reforms.

4. Finally, even periodic state system evaluation efforts by special commissions and/or professional consultants cannot substitute for ongoing systematic assessment of the effectiveness of higher education programs and institutions.

State governors and legislators are asking state boards of higher education to cooperate with the state's institutions to produce evidence of effectiveness. This involves multiple measures and careful design of assessment efforts in order to ensure fairness and comprehensiveness. By leading this effort, state boards may increasingly become characterized as "evaluating boards" for the assessments they conduct themselves, or for the institutional evaluations they monitor. Where ongoing evaluations are developed, statewide boards must incorporate the results of such evaluations into their own planning, budgeting and program review activities.

Chapter II

STATE EVALUATION PRACTICES

Before the actual research findings are presented, a framework for understanding the evaluation process in higher education should be constructed, along with a preview of the evaluation models analyzed in detail in later chapters.

Evaluation Frameworks

State level decision making in higher education occurs through two different processes. Both can operate at any one time, and both can affect any given decision. One is incremental decision making, which has a short time horizon and involves negotiation and bargaining between different interest groups. Most political decision making is of this type. The essence of an incremental decision is to use the available information to reach a decision that will satisfice* the various interests that are involved.

Comprehensive is the second variety of decision making. It has a longer time perspective, is based on planning and extensive data collection and expertise (Schmidtlein, 1982). Comprehensive decisions are made in the context of management goals and priorities. Feedback and evaluation are integral to this process. Comprehensive decision making is widely used in the management of large and medium-sized public or private organizations.

Evaluation formats differ for incremental and comprehensive decision processes.

Evaluation usually occurs in incremental decision processes because a problem or crisis arises. The conventional wisdom among incremental decision makers is that "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Assessment is not a regular part of most incremental decisions, which are judged largely on the basis of their ability to "satisfice" the various constituent groups involved. Formal evaluation, when it does occur as the result of a crisis, emphasizes judgment more than information or analysis. The emphasis is on having key interest group viewpoints heard and

*"Satisfice" as used here means to reach an agreement which lets the organization continue, even though no one got all they wanted from the decision. Budgets are almost always "satisficed;" agreements are reached and programs proceed even though no one gets all they want.

represented in the final decision. Evaluation may involve the advice of experts, a task force, special committee, or commission which will hold hearings, review evidence, and draw conclusions. The judgments of experts or influentials are usually more important than information or analysis. The goal is to get agreement; a secondary goal may be to solve the problem. An incremental evaluation must deal with people's perceptions of the problem, whether or not they deal with the problem itself.

Comprehensive decision processes usually have evaluation built into the process itself. Ideally, comprehensive decision processes proceed from planning to decision, to resource allocation, program implementation, evaluation and feedback followed by modification. This is often called the "rational planning model." Assessment is either continuous (monitoring) or it occurs at scheduled intervals. The emphasis is on objective and comprehensive information and analysis. Expert judgment is important, but a good data base and analytic methods are essential. The goals of comprehensive evaluation processes are: improvement of ongoing operations, and avoidance of operational failures.

States now use both incremental and comprehensive evaluations, but the introduction of comprehensive systematic assessment at the state level, is quite recent. Incremental evaluation is still the dominant procedure.

Historically, incremental evaluations of state higher education systems were done by special study groups. Evaluations varied in the use of experts as staff or consultants. These evaluations relied on unpredictable levels of information collection; most of them used information which was readily available since there was no time for elaborate studies or multi-year analysis.

The strengths of the special study commission are that it permits (but does not ensure) objective appraisal, and it provides a broad perspective on complex issues. When influential people serve as evaluators, the recommendations usually get attention and carry credibility.

The weaknesses of this type of evaluation are that it may have limited information to guide decisions, and there is no continuity or institutional memory about the issues to be studied because the evaluation process is not institutionalized. It is quite common to see successive commissions at five to ten year intervals examine the same problems and come up with similar recommendations to their predecessors. There is little opportunity for follow-up and others are left to adopt and implement recommendations.

Despite these limitations, special commissions are a primary type of incremental evaluation, as will be shown later. They fit well into the political culture and the way that most state-level decisions are made.

They also fit well into the autonomous and decentralized nature of higher education. Public colleges and universities have a great deal of substantive autonomy in America. Most of the important educational decisions about who is admitted, what is taught, and what standards are maintained are made at or within the institution by faculty or departments.

Institutions operate primarily by incremental decision processes, although growth has made them increasingly bureaucratic, and more comprehensive decision making is beginning to take hold.

When state agencies were established, they were expected to develop comprehensive plans, make decisions based on data and analysis, and use objective criteria for their recommendations about budgets and programs. As one agency head put it: "Good information and a statewide perspective are our special contributions to the policy process." Although most agencies adopted comprehensive approaches to decision making, they also had to operate in a political environment with a more incremental style. State agencies have had to use mixed strategies. For example, they would develop a five-year fiscal plan, make budget recommendations on objective criteria, and also participate in the annual budget bargaining process in the legislature to fit the requests to the available revenues.

The strengths of the comprehensive approach are that the state agency can make an important contribution to the state policy-making process -- it can offer a long-range statewide perspective and analysis of budget and program issues based on systematic and comprehensive information. This contribution is valued in states where legislative and gubernatorial staffs have become advanced in professional skills, a trend which is increasing.

The weakness of the comprehensive approach is that it can be ignored or rejected unless it can fit its analyses within the ongoing incremental-political decision environment. The agency must operate with a mixed strategy, and it cannot depend only on logic and rational analysis to make its case. In addition, the cost of data and analytical work is much higher than in the incremental process.

As the state higher education agenda has shifted from concerns about growth and access to concerns about quality and efficiency, the states have been pushed to get more involved in

comprehensive ongoing evaluation, and specifically, assessment of institutional quality.

Involvement of the state agency in assessment provides the continuity necessary to assess statewide objectives with multiple approaches that can be repeated periodically. In addition, it can provide comparable information for all institutions; comparability will not result naturally from institutional-level evaluations.

However, the comprehensive state approach to evaluation may lead to institutional compliance without motivation to internal improvement. The institutions may believe self-evaluation is the proper path to improvement and resist any external evaluation, especially if it may present them in a negative light. The unknown consequences of an external evaluation are always threatening to an institution's most valuable asset - its image.

Formative and Summative Evaluation

The two major purposes of evaluation are improvement and accountability. The former, often called formative evaluation, is focused on how organizations improve effectiveness. Self-evaluation is the formative process favored by higher education. It keeps control of the evaluation process within the academy.

Accountability is a summative and judgmental process and almost by definition, this evaluation must be done by an external party. Fiscal accountability is a well-established process in our society, but program and managerial accountability are newer evaluation objectives with less well-defined rules and procedures.

Higher education is involved in both self-evaluation and organizational accountability. The two kinds of evaluation are so different that it is difficult to serve both improvement and accountability objectives with a single evaluation process.

Process or Outcome Evaluation

Process evaluation tells us nothing about whether the business or agency was successful or unsuccessful in achieving its purposes. As an example in fiscal accountability, process questions would be: were the proper accounts kept, and were proper procedures followed. Outcome evaluation, by contrast, tries to determine success or failure, or the relative effectiveness of the organization as compared with another.

The outcomes of higher education are difficult to measure. Due to the diversity of postsecondary education, the outcomes

sought by different institutions vary greatly. As a result, evaluation of higher education has focused on the processes being used and the resource inputs available. It has also followed the self-evaluation model in its accreditation process which evaluates institutions in relation to their stated purposes. Variations in institutional purposes and clientele mean that common and general standards for evaluation of all institutions or all students are virtually non-existent. This is regarded as a virtue in our decentralized individualistic society, but because evaluation is so relativistic, it is hard to develop any real understanding of how well the systems perform. Are they improving, remaining stable, or declining?

Crisis, Periodic, or Continuous Evaluation

The timing of evaluations is important. Comprehensive evaluation processes give feedback at regular intervals to improve decisions on budgets, curriculum, admissions standards or other institutional functions and practices. Self-evaluation as a part of accreditation has been regularized on five- to ten-year cycles. This periodicity is appropriate for functions that need to change slowly and need only occasional "fine tuning." If there is no perceived need for basic change and if there is satisfaction with the system, periodic evaluations can even become formalities with little impact.

The pace of change in our society is quite rapid and external influences, particularly fiscal crises, sometimes trigger special evaluations. Studies done in response to fiscal crises focus on efficiency issues - how can the system be cut back without reducing services? They also tend to develop short-term solutions. Crisis evaluations may have a different agenda to evaluate than periodic or continuous evaluation processes; they often focus on change of structure and/or key personalities.

State Evaluation and Institutional Evaluation

Institutional evaluation is focused on the performance of individuals - students and faculty. State evaluation, by contrast, is concerned with the assessment of broad program areas, institutions, and the effectiveness of the entire system. The state is concerned with the availability of opportunities for citizens, the extent to which the system serves the diverse needs of different client groups, and the ability of graduates to contribute to the economy and future development of the state.

Even when the evaluation needs of the state and the institution are similar, the institutional data will not be useful at the state level without special summarization. States want to compare institutional results from year to year, between

institutions, and between themselves and other states. The need for outcome information requires comparability of measures across institutions, between states and over time. These needs will require more uniform measures and summarization of data for multi-year periods.

The Major Models of Evaluation

Until the last two decades, most states left to the institutions the responsibility for assessment of programs, personnel, and performance of higher education. As an exception, the New York State Regents have long had formal responsibility for accreditation of the public and private institutions in their jurisdiction, but only since World War II have other states developed formal program review processes for public institutions. Many states have been minimal participants, merely requiring that institutions have a published process and leaving the responsibility for the review at the institutional level (Barak, 1983). Broader evaluations of institutional effectiveness (comprehensive in nature) have been even rarer.

Nevertheless, there are a variety of procedures which have been used to assess state agencies and state systems. The major models addressed in subsequent chapters are:

1. Self-evaluation
2. Performance Audit/Sunset Reviews
3. Special study groups or commissions
4. Comprehensive Reviews and Assessments

Self-Evaluation

The most fundamental and traditional form of evaluation is that of self-evaluation. As Chapter III explains, self-evaluation can take many forms - from informal self-evaluation conducted at a board retreat by a state board of higher education to formal exercises with out-of-state participation. These self-evaluations tend to be formative in nature rather than summative, but serve useful purposes within those policy limits.

A variation on board self-evaluation could be to broaden the regional accrediting processes to include evaluation of statewide boards. This was done by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges for the Idaho Board of Regents and will be discussed below.

The accreditation process has been an evaluation vehicle for system performance in other states. Maryland's Board of Higher Education made a formal agreement with the Middle States Accrediting Association for participation in the periodic

accreditation of Maryland public institutions. New York's Regents accredit both public and private institutions.

Self-evaluation against an institution's own goals can be useful to a motivated institution; however, accreditation is not particularly helpful in responding to the state's accountability interests. Accreditation reports are not public,which sharply limits their ability to serve the accountability process. State officials are skeptical of the institutional self-evaluation process because they often see self-regulation fail in their own professions. For these reasons, many states are developing institutional evaluation procedures that are independent from the traditional accreditation process.

Performance Audits

State legislatures are concerned about their responsibility for ensuring program accountability. In the 1960's and 1970's, many states developed program audit staffs to examine the effectiveness of state agencies. Evaluations of higher education agencies by audit staff have occurred in many of those states. Some program audits of higher education are done as part of periodic "sunset" reviews which determine whether the agency should be continued. Other audits have been ad hoc examinations initiated by legislators.

Audits are usually narrow in scope, and have a tendency to become management or financial audits which examine what the agency is doing to follow legislative intent. They usually do not examine the operation of the entire higher education system and usually do not assess the state board's role in leading the system, setting policy and addressing broad issues.

Special Study Commissions

Prior to development of most statewide higher education agencies, special study commissions were the dominant model for examining statewide higher education systems. These were "blue ribbon commissions" of lay citizens or legislators, or a combination of both. The studies served many purposes: future planning, resolving disagreements, setting public agendas for action, fact-finding and analysis, and evaluation.

As state agencies assumed responsibility for planning, program approval and resource allocation, ad hoc statewide studies by commissions declined in frequency. Continuous planning by an agency which had the capacity to follow up on its decisions was believed to be preferable. However, the master plans developed by state agencies involved limited evaluation of existing institutions and programs. Most were future-oriented

plans designed to chart a course for higher education development. Assessment was not usually a major purpose of these planning efforts. In the 1960's, higher education was growing rapidly and state agencies were trying to control and direct that growth with their plans; assessment of quality received little emphasis.

As the economic, educational and political environment became more turbulent in the late 1970's, concern about the adequacy and effectiveness of state education systems grew among governors and legislators. Some questioned the ability of statewide agencies to deal with these complex issues and there was a resurgence of ad hoc blue ribbon commissions to examine higher educations systems (Johnson and Marcus, 1986). These special commissions are used for several reasons:

1. If the state needs to examine all levels of education there is usually not a single agency which could appropriately conduct the study. Most states have separate boards for K-12 and postsecondary institutions.

2. If the state higher education agency does not have the confidence of the legislature and governor because the board has been seen to be ineffective in dealing with policy issues, the state will look elsewhere for advice.

3. The state agency may be seen as an advocate for higher education and a more objective assessment is needed. This will be particularly true if state leaders think a change in governance structure is necessary.

4. When the state faces a major crisis in funding or quality, it is important to get proposed changes on the public agenda where they can be supported by state leaders. A special commission of influentials may be able to accomplish this most readily.

About half the states have appointed special commissions to study and make recommendations about higher education (or all levels of education) during the past five years (ECS, 1986). The commissions are more frequent in states which have experienced economic downturns, but that is not the only reason for their appeal to state governments.

Comprehensive Evaluation

Recent interest in higher education reform and improvement has led public officials to urge assessment of system outcomes and effectiveness in meeting state objectives. Assessment is seen as an integral and necessary part of program improvement efforts. States like New Jersey, Tennessee, Missouri, Florida

and Arkansas are responding to this new mandate. The push for assessment has not been institutionalized in most states and state agencies are still trying to determine how assessments ought to be conducted. The governors have jointly recommended it be ongoing, that it involve institutional leadership, and that multiple measures of outcomes be a part of the assessment (Time for Results 1986).

An assessment system that would satisfy those objectives would examine student learning outcomes and the readiness of graduates to fill professional and technical jobs. It would report regularly on the extent to which each institution is meeting state objectives. The evaluation system should be structured to make the information useful in the planning and budgeting process. Because evaluation data can be unfavorable, a comprehensive evaluation system of this type will be threatening to some programs in many institutions, and to most programs in a few institutions. It will also require institutional leaders to pay attention to objectives that are being measured by the evaluation system. Designing an assessment system that meets state accountability needs and also provides positive incentives to institutions to improve themselves is the real challenge.

A recent survey of state level assessment activity by SHEEO and ECS shows that agencies in 30-35 states are involved in some form of ongoing assessment program. In a majority of these states, the state agency is monitoring institutional assessments, but each institution develops its own evaluation program; some states set state guidelines for assessment. In several states there is an implicit goal of having institutions do credible evaluations to keep the legislature or another state organization from taking over the process. Most states are trying to assess institutional and program effectiveness in conventional ways such as peer review. There is, however, a new emphasis on measuring student outcomes. About a dozen states are at various stages in defining and developing methodologies for outcome assessment. Some states are taking several years to involve institutions in developing measures and implementing reporting systems.

Summary

States are entering a new phase where many state agencies are encouraging, assisting and monitoring institutions as they establish assessment systems. At the same time, states are continuing to do program audits and set up special commissions to study and evaluate higher education. State leaders still turn to prominent citizens and outside experts for advice and consultation on education systems even if a comprehensive evaluation system is in place or being developed. This is because political leadership has always availed itself of advice from many sources and comprehensive evaluation will not have all,

if even most, of the answers state leaders seek. The combined environment of incremental and comprehensive decision making perpetuates the use of varied evaluation models.

Chapter III

SELF-EVALUATION BY THE STATE BOARD

This study found that self-evaluation can be valuable in improving state higher education agency operations. However, it does not obviate the need for comprehensive evaluation of a state's system of higher education. Inasmuch as improvement of the effectiveness of a state board of higher education may be thought to lead to improvements in the overall state system, a linkage can made between the two processes.

This chapter will focus on board self-evaluations which can run the gamut from highly informal processes to formally structured periodic events. The examples given here demonstrate the various levels of formality and the diverse formats which can be construed as self-evaluations of boards.

A. Processes. Boards initiating self-evaluation can: 1) develop internal guidelines and processes; 2) use a set of self-study guidelines and criteria published by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) (one set for state coordinating boards and another set for state consolidated governing boards); 3) hire a consulting firm to undertake the evaluation; or 4) create an ad hoc group of consultants who will develop a set of procedures. Selected cases will illustrate each alternative.

1. Informal Evaluation. At the minimum, a state board can set aside some time from its regular operating agenda to take stock of how it is performing various missions. The success of such exercises is dependent on advance planning, and is often conducted as a one- or two-day retreat. The Arizona Board of Regents generally reported that such activities are helpful and constructive.

In some states, however, sunshine laws inhibit board self-evaluation efforts; boards may feel that candid self-criticism in public could be used by critics to weaken the board. In some cases board leadership may be hesitant to initiate a public board evaluation process because they don't think it is appropriate or productive to discuss personnel and other sensitive matters in public.

2. Association of Governing Boards - Guidelines. The AGB reports that, by far, institutional and multi-campus system boards are the heaviest users of AGB self-evaluation kits containing evaluation criteria and guidelines on how to undertake the process. The AGB also nominates qualified persons to serve as "Board Mentors" during the recommended sequence which includes a self-study and careful follow-up.

The AGB indicates that three state consolidated governing boards have used the self-evaluation kits since 1983 (Iowa, Mississippi and Nevada). We heard a generally favorable set of reactions from one of the states, with cautions about timing--proceed during stable conditions as opposed to during a crisis state--and the importance of selecting sensitive Mentors.

3. Consulting Firm. In 1986, the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board decided as part of its adopted "Board Objectives for 1986" to:

> conduct its own mission study with a performance audit of the Board, staff, projects and responsibilities, including a specific examination of whether the resources devoted to Policy Analysis and Development are sufficient to meet the Board's responsibilities in these areas, and to develop, as needed, specific proposals including budgetary and legislative changes to enable the Board to exercise discretion in setting its annual management plan and to enable the Board to continue to develop innovative and new proposals and projects (1986).

The audit was conducted by a four-person team assembled by the M & H Group Inc. of Boulder, Colorado, with further help from a three-person Advisory Panel. The audit team spoke only to board members and staff and did not tap the opinions of persons in higher education institutions or in state government. The process occurred between April and September 1986.

The 63-page report (plus appendices) ends with findings and recommendations concerning: 1) board-related issues; 2) organization issues; and 3) management issues.

The board executive director reported that the board felt comfortable with the results because the board itself issued the Request for Proposal that initiated the process.

4. Ad Hoc Consulting Group. In 1982 the Maryland State Board for Higher Education (SBHE) asked four persons from out of state to conduct an evaluation of the SBHE's general effectiveness. A Columbia University Teachers College professor, the President of the University of Kentucky, a New Jersey legislator, and a former SHEEO (author Folger), constituted the evaluation group. In this case, the team was given a free hand to develop its own agenda. It interviewed state board members, board staff, and key actors in higher education and state government (including the governor).

The 46-page report was divided into analyses of nine board functions each with sections on "views presented to the team," "findings," and "recommendations." The report was used essentially as an internal document, albeit one shared with the governor. Reportedly, the board and staff found the recommendations useful.

5. Legislatively Mandated Periodic Self-Evaluation. This variation will strike some readers as not qualifying for a self-evaluation label, but it is at least in part a self-evaluation. For example, enabling legislation creating the Alabama Commission on Higher Education in 1969 included a provision requiring an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Commission every four years by a team including at least three persons not associated with higher education in Alabama.

Why could a state-mandated evaluation be termed self-evaluation? Primarily because the Commission plays the major role in the selection of the evaluators, the reviews are periodic (non-crisis), and are formative in nature.

The distinction between formative and summative evaluations is based on who initiates the assessment and what its major purpose is. Most of the various forms of state evaluations described in later chapters are either explicitly summative (e.g. a sunset review) or are ad hoc evaluations emerging during some time of board or state crisis when the agency's future is at least implicitly at risk and therefore construed as summative.

Alabama has now been through four cycles of its state-mandated evaluation (1975; 1979; 1983; and 1987) and each report has been clearly formative. On the first cycle, three evaluators were from out-of-state; four from Alabama. For the second cycle, four out-of-state reviewers (including Berdahl) worked with five Alabamians. During the third evaluation cycle a blue ribbon planning group, the "Council of 21", was formed of prestigious state citizens. The formal evaluation was undertaken by four out-of-staters; the commission did not feel it necessary to involve Alabamians beyond those in the blue ribbon group. Finding this set up successful, the Commission stayed with the pattern of four out-of-state evaluators for the fourth cycle in 1987.

It is important to note that in each case the Commission chose the persons who were to evaluate it, making the process into a de facto formative evaluation. The Commission did solicit nominations from the institutions, but the persons chosen were those in whose judgments the Commission had confidence.

In 1975, the first team raised a sensitive point. Those appointed were given a charge to "call them as they saw them", but presumably there was an anticipation that the judgments would

be balanced. People appointed by and, in the case of out-of-state professionals, paid by Commission leadership could feel inhibited about being too critical in public. For this reason, plus the additional important purpose of increasing the executive and legislative branch attention to evaluation recommendations, the 1975 team formally urged that future teams be constituted by a revised process. They suggested that the governor, the presiding officer of the Senate, the presiding officer of the House, and the Commission each appoint an Alabama citizen not presently connected with postsecondary education in the state, and that these four then (with the advice of the Commission) choose the out-of-state team members. This recommendation was not accepted and the board's original selection process has continued.

Jerry Miller, a member of the first team, analyzed the composition and internal relations of his group. The combination of in-state and out-of-state was good because the "locals" could make the team more sensitive to Alabama issues, and later convince citizens and state officials of the need to implement the recommendations. The out-of-state members could bring national perspectives to Alabama issues as well as knowledge about the performance of comparable commissions in other states.

Miller added that it was important for all seven members of the group to be on equal footing--there were no "primary members" or "consultants specializing in this or that topic." Thus discussions were wide-ranging and free-wheeling and a group consensus emerged (Miller, 1975).

The first evaluation team encountered only modest reactions to its 30 recommendations. Although a later report judged that 21 of the 30 recommendations had been favorably responded to and another two partially, the important recommendations to turn the Commission's advisory powers into regulatory powers were not heeded. This may have been due, in part, to political relations between Commission members and the lieutenant governor who later used his considerable powers to persuade the legislature <u>not</u> to strengthen the Commission but to cut its budget significantly instead. A larger variable which affected not only the 1975 recommendations but all subsequent ones as well was that the Commission was in a state with a basic political culture not receptive to objective rational planning. Generally, the political forces (particularly those operating during the long periods when George Wallace served as governor) were not willing to base budget decisions, including many supplemental individual items, on so-called "rational planning". And the leaders of the more powerful higher education institutions felt that since they had to play the political game as individuals anyway, a stronger commission was not in their self-interest.

The second evaluation study was marginally more successful in convincing the legislature to pass a 1979 bill strengthening the Commission. The second team disseminated its findings by printing several thousand brochures summarizing its full report and distributing these to organizations like the League of Women Voters and the Chamber of Commerce.

The legislature, however, included an extra message in the final bill: it required the upper house to confirm the Commission's executive director every four years!

It was perhaps no coincidence that the third evaluation in 1983 emphasized the need for the Commission to improve its relations with the executive and legislative branches of state government.

The 1987 evaluation process is too recent to evaluate impact. Its key recommendation was for the Governor and legislative leadership to create a state blue ribbon task force to recommend governance and finance policies for Alabama higher education--to the end of the century! The chair of the team spent time in the state after the report was published in order to present it to legislative and executive branch personnel.

In sum, the majority of the persons interviewed in Alabama, including both the present and former executive directors of the Commission, supported the periodic state-mandated evaluation process. However, many respondents commented on the limitations imposed by this particular state's political environment.

6. Self-Evaluation Through Accreditation. The presence of a common member on both the Idaho Board of Regents and the regional accrediting association, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, gave rise to a new form of board self-evaluation. The dual membership probably inspired the suggestion that the regional accrediting body assess the role of the statewide board while re-accrediting the four Idaho public senior institutions.

The Northwest Association accepted the invitation and created four campus teams and a fifth team for the system. The latter was composed of persons from adjoining states with senior administrative experience in statewide systems. The chair was the Chancellor of the Oregon State System of Higher Education and a former president of one of the Idaho senior institutions.

Just as individual campuses are required to, the Idaho Board of Regents developed a self-study. The system accrediting team spent time in the state capital discussing issues with the lay members and staff of the state board, visited each institution, and talked with the campus accrediting teams.

The resulting report (1984) was formative evaluation at its best. The recommendations called for a series of measures to strengthen the Idaho Board of Regents, but always with a strong flavor of understanding the constraints within which the board had to operate.

Jim Bemus, Executive Director of the Northwest Association, accompanied the system team, ex officio, and concurred with the way the system team operated. He pointed out that it was easier to undertake a comprehensive system evaluation like this one in a state like Idaho with only four senior institutions than it would be in states with many more public colleges. He also noted that the Northwest Association had to subsidize the system team expenses as the more demanding time and travel needs could not be met by normal fees.

As might be expected from an accreditation study, not many persons outside academe were aware of the accreditation report on the system. Janet Hay, the dual member of the Regents and the accrediting association who was the initiator of the process, later became a state legislator and used the report (and another blue ribbon commission report mentioned in later chapters) to constitute the agenda for a 1985 legislative commission inquiry into higher education governance. But partly because regional accreditation works quietly and confidentially, and partly because many legislators are fairly skeptical about the accrediting movement's ability to be rigorously critical of higher education, this Northwest process must be labelled a formative evaluation with the strengths and the distinct limitations that routinely accompany the accreditation process.

B. Conclusions. From these examples, what can be generalized about the board self-evaluation process?

First, board self-evaluations are considered helpful in improving board performance and, thereby, possibly also system effectiveness. Evaluation processes which use mentors or external groups seem most likely to be helpful.

Second, if there are serious criticisms about the effectiveness of the state board or the state system, or if there are serious political divisions within the state board, then self-evaluations will not be sufficient to restore credibility. There is understandable skepticism about the rigor of self-evaluations, and any process that is designed to influence state leadership must include summative dimensions not usually present in self-evaluation.

Third, the several more elaborate evaluations of the Alabama Commission indicate that while the board could improve its internal operations as a result of these formative assessments, it has not been able to use them to persuade state political

leaders to rely more on the comprehensive planning and evaluation process.

Fourth, the evaluation of state boards by regional accrediting associations has potential for internal formative evaluation. However, it would be difficult to attempt it in states with many public institutions. The ultimate value of such an exercise may lie in the greater appreciation of the values and problems of statewide governance and coordination gained by the accrediting agency in the course of conducting the evaluation. One of the criticisms leveled at regional accreditation of single campuses is that such evaluations usually pay insufficient attention to the campus' role in its multi-campus and/or state setting. State boards that invite regional accrediting association evaluation may be getting two values for the price of one!

Chapter IV

ACCOUNTABILITY, PERFORMANCE AUDITS AND SUNSET REVIEWS

A. The Changing Pattern of Accountability

The development of performance audits and sunset reviews over the last 20 years represents a major development of the accountability movement in state government. When state government was simpler and smaller, legislators set budget priorities and judged agency effectiveness without much systematic information. As state government expanded in size and complexity, legislators sought new ways to assess the performance of state agencies. Regular fiscal audits (which were established processes in all states by the time World War I began) were sometimes supplemented by management audits concerned with efficiency and compliance with legislative intent. Most state agencies operated in a context which assumed indefinite perpetuation.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, legislators began to focus on the need for measurement of outcomes, and the use of cost/benefit analyses as a better basis for deciding among competing policies. A Legislative Program Evaluation (LPE) section emerged as part of the National Conference of State Legislatures and LPE units appeared in over 40 states during the two decades.

In some cases the LPE unit was a new legislative creature, such as the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission in Virginia where a multi-disciplinary team undertook performance audits of various Virginia state agencies and reported to a bipartisan joint legislative committee.

In other states, the program evaluation function was added to the state auditor's traditional jurisdiction and the post-audits were broadened beyond fiscal and management evaluations of legality and efficiency to include issues of effectiveness. An effectiveness evaluation necessarily involves questions of goals, purposes and values, and these cannot always be derived from statutes. Thus, for those agencies selected in any particular year for performance audit, LPE staff would try to develop performance indicators to determine the extent to which the presumed goals were being met. Evaluators look for indicators that are quantitative in nature, but also use interviews, questionnaires, and other attitude measures. Draft audit reports are normally shown to the agency in question which has an opportunity to correct factual mistakes and to comment on disagreements in judgment. The final report may contain the

audit report, the agency's reactions and the audit staff's final rejoinders.

Beginning with Colorado legislation in 1975, most states have enacted some form of sunset legislation wherein state agencies are scheduled for review and possible termination by a certain date unless explicitly renewed. In some states, all state departments are subject to sunset review, and in other states, specific agencies are targeted. Sunset evaluation, as a tool of accountability, overlaps considerably with the performance audit process and occasionally the same staff is used for both functions.

B. The Application of this Accountability to Higher Education

While many may applaud new accountability patterns as a significant advance in the art of government, there are those in higher education who argue that the outcomes of higher education are less susceptible to this kind of measurement. Two case studies of state performance audits of higher education, illustrate typical controversies surrounding efforts to apply such evaluations: the community college system in Virginia and the University of Wisconsin system (Berdahl, 1977). Even though each of these assessments began as a comprehensive program audit, each ended up as primarily a more narrow management audit.

This management dimension of the audit is likely to come most into play when performance audits/sunset reviews are turned toward the operations of state boards. Management audits of state boards tend to involve an analysis of the extent to which they are achieving their officially established purposes and how well they are conducting their primary functions. In this chapter, four examples of performance audits, sunset reviews or accountability evaluations will be presented. They reveal the probable outcome of auditing a state board independent of larger system-wide issues and structures.

1. Connecticut and South Carolina. The first two performance audits of state boards occurred in Connecticut in 1977 and South Carolina in 1978 when criticisms of the boards in those states prompted legislative interest. Although both were done by the LPE state agency, there were big differences in the two reports. This report concentrates on the South Carolina process which was more elaborate.

The Connecticut study Strengthening Higher Education in Connecticut (April 1977) gave considerable evidence of having been conducted under time pressure. Some of the original charge to the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee was not included in the report, and an "Agency Response" normally

included in LPE reports was omitted.[1] The weakness of the report as an evaluation document was that it contained no explicit framework for evaluation of the statewide board in its existing form. Instead, general conclusions and recommendations were presented about the need for stronger central leadership, a stronger board role in planning, budgeting and program review and a better management information system. These judgments may or may not be correct; the point is that the document does not connect them to any criteria for evaluation. The proper balance between state oversight, coordination and accountability on the one hand, and institutional initiative, autonomy, and responsibility on the other is not easy to determine. Without a framework for assessment, the likelihood of divergent judgments is great.

In contrast, the South Carolina process was much more careful both in devising a conceptual framework and in the lengths to which the staff went in order to acquire relevant evidence. Ironically, this elaborate process evaluated a board that was altered just before the audit report came out! A bill strengthening the Commission and removing its institutional representatives passed three months before the audit report was published with similar recommendations. Nevertheless, the process merits our attention.

In 1977 the Legislative Audit Council (LAC) in South Carolina was asked by the Speaker of the House to evaluate the Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The subsequent report, Management and Operational Review of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (June 14, 1978), recommended changes in CHE membership and in several aspects of CHE operations in planning, budget review and program review. Although the report was controversial in that it explicitly disavowed any intention of describing "CHE accomplishments," the seriousness of the LAC effort was clearly demonstrated not only by the creation of elaborate evaluation criteria, but also by the extensive additional activities which were undertaken. Covering CHE development since its establishment in 1967, the LAC audit staff interviewed 56 persons, mostly from the ranks of higher education, observed CHE meetings and committee functions over a nine month period, visited coordinating agencies in Alabama and Tennessee, inspected agency plans from 17 other states, employed several out-of-state consultants (including author Berdahl) to evaluate specific aspects of CHE operations, and conducted a

[1] The study recommended the replacement of the existing coordinating board by a stronger board with changed membership. The state government subsequently changed the board functions and authority; but the link between the audit report and the legislative action is not clear.

user-survey of 234 persons in the State concerning the quality and usefulness of CHE studies and reports. The LAC was a relatively new agency in South Carolina (it was established in 1974) and it was trying to demonstrate its professionalism by conducting a careful performance audit.

The evaluation criteria considered goals and objectives, planning, budgeting, program evaluation, and overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Commission. For each of these headings the audit staff developed research questions, methods, measures and criteria. (A later evaluation of the South Carolina Commission occurred as part of a special study of the whole state system by the AVA group in 1986. This study will be analyzed in Chapter V.)

2. Colorado. The Colorado Commission on Higher Education was established in 1965, strengthened in 1970, and had seen its budget and staff severely cut in 1975. When a bill in 1977 strengthened the Commission, the bill included a sunset provision for the year 1983.

The first step of the Colorado sunset review is a self-study. An outside sunset review committee is appointed to hold hearings, review the self-study, and to publish its own report. The State Auditor's staff then conducts an independent performance audit. In this review, a seven person citizen committee chaired by a former legislator was formed to critique the CCHE report.

The resulting report (Sunset Review Committee, 1982) analyzed criticisms of the Commission in 10 different categories. It found the Commission's activities justified, but urged greater sensitivity to the need to keep the institutions informed of the Commission's positions.

The state auditor's Report (July 1982) came out three months later and endorsed continuation of the Commission but recognized some substantial problems with clarity of authority, inadequate information systems, and conflict with governing boards.

For each of ten functions (not the same ten as the Sunset Review Committee) the audit staff answered the same four questions:

1. Is there need for this function on a centralized basis?

2. Is the Commission the appropriate organization to provide the function?

3. How has the Commission addressed the function?

4. What improvements are needed?

To gather the necessary information, the audit staff used the following sources:

State Law

Legislative and other public hearings

Commission reports, studies and other publications

Site visits to various institutions

Interviews with legislators, students, governing board members and staff, and college personnel

Questionnaires (reported in their Appendices) to governing board members, researchers and student financial aid officers.

Clearly, in Colorado as in the 1978 South Carolina audit, considerable care was taken to undertake a comprehensive audit.

Most of the Colorado participants interviewed for this study gave the overall sunset review process low marks for effectiveness. This judgment was based on the fact that the process had not led to the termination or "sunset" of any agency except the Commission on the Status of Women, and that the process, as it evolved in Colorado, had not led to many constructive changes in agencies or any substantial saving of money. The agency self-study was seen as a way for the agency to shape the audit report in a direction that would be favorable to the agency, and to build up support for the value of the agency. The respondents felt that the self-study of the Commission was a good example of presenting the agency in a favorable way (which may have been justified) and that the audit did not (and probably could not) deal with some major policy issues facing the state, including governance questions. The auditor's report did call for the legislature to undertake further studies of the governing patterns in Colorado. The Commission endorsed that recommendation, and that was, in fact, the scenario which transpired. The Commission's life was extended and the legislature authorized a special citizen committee to study and make recommendations about restructuring Colorado higher education--issues the sunset review sidestepped. This study will be discussed in Chapter V.

3. West Virginia. The West Virginia Board of Regents was established in 1969 and was first evaluated in 1979 by an external study by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) commissioned by the state legislature. This AED study is covered in a later chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that the legislature did not accept the primary AED policy recommendations to abolish the Board of Regents and to replace it with a statewide coordinating board with segmental governing boards for

the university, state colleges and community colleges. The legislature did, however, act in 1981 to strengthen the Board of Regents in several ways recommended by the AED as a second policy option. In 1979, the legislature had enacted a West Virginia sunset law, which scheduled the Board of Regents for a review in 1984.

The Legislative Auditor's Office which conducts the sunset evaluations has a small staff and the schedule of state units to be assessed each year is very demanding. Ten reviews were scheduled with the Regents in 1984; most years had 10-12 agency reviews scheduled.

For each agency reviewed, the audit staff are to try to answer the following ten questions:

(1) The nature of the objectives intended for the program or entity and the problem or need which it was intended to address, the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, and any activities of the entity or program in addition to those granted by statute and the authority for these activities;

(2) The extent to which the government entity or program has operated in the public interest and the extent to which its operation has been impeded or enhanced by existing statutes and any other circumstances bearing upon the governmental entity's or program's capacity or authority to operate in the public interest, including budgetary, resource and personnel matters;

(3) The extent to which the jurisdiction of the entity or program duplicates those of other entities and programs and the extent to which the entity or program or its activities could be considered with others;

(4) The efficiency with which the agency operates;

(5) The extent to which the governmental entity or program has recommended statutory changes to the legislature which would benefit the public;

(6) The extent to which the entity of program issues and enforces rules relating to potential conflicts of interest of its employees;

(7) The extent to which affirmative action requirements of state and federal statues and constitutions have been complied with by the governmental entity or program;

(8) The extent to which the governmental entity or program has encouraged participation by the public in making its decisions;

(9) The impact in terms of federal intervention or loss of federal funds if the agency is abolished;

(10) The extent to which the governmental entity or program has caused an unnecessary burden on any citizen or other governmental entity or program by its decisions and activities.

The Legislative Auditor's Office published its Performance Audit of the Board of Regents on June 30, 1984, answering as best it could the ten questions listed above. In this task it was aided by both the Board's answers to the questions and by the judicious use of lengthy quotes from the 1979 AED evaluation which now had a second life due to the overworked condition of the small staff.

The Joint Committee on Government Operations, to whom the audit was addressed, agreed to recommend continuation of the Board but, instead of a five year extension, called for another sunset review before July 1, 1988. This highly qualified vote of confidence reflected less the relatively muted criticisms of the Board in the audit report and more the volatile political climate in the state. As an example of this volatility, Governor Moore in 1986 recommended abolition of the Board and its replacement by a three-person, paid, full-time coordinating board, with governing boards again at the institutional level. The legislature (majority of Democrats) did not accept the governor's (Republican) recommendation. The Board is undergoing its 1987-88 sunset review.

4. Washington. Performance audits of state agencies began in Washington as early as 1972, and a sunset law was passed in 1977. The legislative audit staff estimates that it spends about 30% of its time on sunset reviews and the other 70% on management and policy audits. The various audits are similar with one obvious distinction - the sunset review has an explicit continuation/termination issue to be faced. The legislative audit process in Washington has been criticized for being too preoccupied with auditing small agencies performing obsolete functions, and not spending enough time evaluating the major functions of state government where more than 95% of state funds are expended.

This criticism did not apply to the 1984 audit of the Council for Postsecondary Education (CPE), for it was a substantial and costly agency with major functions.

The Council on Higher Education, as it was originally called, was established in 1969 as an advisory group with planning responsibility but without regulatory authority. It solidly established itself with strong legislative support, high quality gubernatorial appointments, and astute executive leadership. It was reorganized as the Council on Postsecondary

Education in 1974, and most of the college presidents and legislators who had been in the Council were removed from membership. The revised membership had representation from many sectors, following the suggestions in the Federal 1202 legislation. Beginning in the late 1970's, the Council gradually lost the confidence of the legislature and of the executive staff in the governor's office. It was perceived as ineffective in dealing with important issues, and unable to stand up to college and university pressures. The sunset review was requested by the legislature, and the CPE was placed on the list in 1983, for review in 1984, and termination December 31, 1985 unless re-authorized.

A senior auditor spent approximately six months on the Council audit, issuing a report (January 21, 1985) noting weaknesses in the agency and recommending its replacement by a stronger unit with a new Director. The governor's Office of Financial Management (OFM) did not agree to terminate the Council, but the Legislative Budget Committee (LBC) agreed. The LBC, however, rejected a further recommendation to convert the existing coordinating board into a consolidated governing board with jurisdiction over all public two year and senior institutions.

Reporting about the same time as the auditor was a three year study by a blue ribbon Washington State Temporary Committee on Educational Policies, Structure and Management (December 19, 1984). (See Chapter V.) This group, studying issues at all levels of education, recommended replacement of the existing coordinating board by a stronger board of the same type.

Additionally, discussions about the future of higher education and CPE led to creation of two special legislative study committees during 1984. The study committees produced two similar bills, which were negotiated and passed in 1985. This created a new Higher Education Coordinating Board effective January 1, 1986. The new board was actually the product of a total policy process which involved a blue ribbon commission, the sunset review, and two legislative study committees. The sunset review alone would not have been capable of responding to such wide-ranging concern over governance.

C. Conclusions on Performance Audit and Sunset Review

First, evaluations of performance are probably an inevitable development in an environment demanding increased accountability. But it is a difficult task when the agency being evaluated operates in a political environment where its policy and oversight roles are shared with the legislature, the governor, and the institutions. It is difficult to find effective indicators of agency performance, and the goals of various groups for the agency will vary and may be at odds with the legal basis

for the agency's operations. The ultimate measure of SHEA performance is reflected in the way the system of higher education operates, and some respondents to this inquiry did not think that agencies ought to be evaluated apart from the evaluation of the system as a whole. At the same time, the SHEA has only limited authority (even when it is a governing board) over the quality and direction of development of institutions in the system; they quite properly have the primary role in institutional functioning.

Second, even if the audit staff represent a multi-disciplinary cross-section sensitive to subtle academic values, there is the problem of time pressure and audit workload. It is an exceedingly demanding job to move quickly from one complex policy area to another, pausing en route often to develop new measurement indicators of policy outcomes in areas where the internal professionals have long been unable (or sometimes unwilling) to reach agreement.

The performance audit/sunset review process is supposed to operate as an accountability process to ensure that agencies are operating effectively. But in the states observed, it was applied mostly to agencies that were perceived to be in trouble, so there is a prior judgment about the agency that is put on the sunset list. It is not clear that the audits performed a formative function of stimulating agency self-improvement in any of the four states we observed. In two cases (Colorado and Washington) the agency was eventually terminated and replaced with a new one, but in both those states the process of change involved a citizens' committee as well as the sunset review. In the two other states, the agency did not view the audit as in any way helping them to improve.

For this process to be constructive in higher education, audits will have to look at more than statutory provisions regarding the state board's operations. The criteria against which the performance of the state agency will be judged need to be explicit. To the extent that the agency is judged by the way the system of public and private institution functions in meeting state needs, it must be recognized that the state agency does not have perfect control over the system (even when it is a governing board). It must also be recognized that the state agency cannot control the system if it wants effective universities. The audit process is not well suited to review of a system that depends for its effectiveness on a great deal of autonomy and decentralized professional judgment. Most audits thus far have been based on the state's obvious interests in efficiency and accountability. Whether the audit process can take proper account of the decentralized, autonomous nature of higher education systems is problematic.

The SHEA is better evaluated as a part of a broader evaluation of the whole state system; the relatively little that can be learned from a narrow assessment of state agency functioning does not merit the trouble and expense of a performance audit/sunset review.

The complexity and decentralization of the state system, and the difficulty of assessing its basic goals of educating students, advancing knowledge, and serving the public requires an ongoing assessment process that looks at the broader picture and provides periodic feedback for improvements at the operating level. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters VI and VII.

Chapter V

EVALUATION THROUGH SPECIAL STUDIES AND BLUE RIBBON COMMISSIONS

The special study commission is widely used in American government at both the federal and state levels to examine problems, develop plans and recommendations, and evaluate a wide variety of public issues. Higher education has been a favorite topic for special studies; in the thirties and forties these studies were the predominant way in which higher education was evaluated or examined. In the sixties and seventies more states developed systematic ongoing planning and evaluation procedures through state higher education agencies and state audit agencies, but there were still many special studies. The eighties have seen an increase in special studies as a result of heightened national and state interest in the quality of education. In 1982 Allan Odden, of the Education Commission of the States, identified over 200 educational study groups and commissions that were formed in the preceding year in the states (Quoted in Garland and Hunter, 1987).

"Blue Ribbon Commissions" can be thought of as a variation of special studies. They are defined by Johnson and Marcus (1986, p. iv), as having: a) predetermined length, b) eminent individuals from a variety of backgrounds, c) staff and funds to assist in fulfilling their charge, d) a charge to investigate and/or recommend changes in structures, functions, origins, or processes." The definition may also include public authorization from either the governor, the legislature, or both. Some commissions are privately authorized and funded, but they are likely to have more difficulty in getting their recommendations on the public agenda.

"Blue Ribbon" refers to the caliber of people appointed to membership. Most of these commissions are appointed by a public official or group, most often the governor, the legislature, or some combination of the two.

Special commissions are usually a part of the incremental decision processes of the government, and their work (and their impact) can best be understood when placed in the political context which led to their establishment.

Special commissions vary in the kind of recommendations made, characteristics of commission members, budgetary support; and the defined timetable for the commission.

A recent study of Blue Ribbon Commissions (Johnson and Marcus, 1986) examined nearly 50 commissions to identify the

factors that seemed to make some commissions more effective (have more impact) than others. Among the factors that identified as contributing to success were: (a) having a manageable task, (b) having enough time to do the study, (c) adequacy of staff, (d) extensive use of outside experts, (e) favorable media relations, (f) commissioners who are involved in the implementation process (p. iii). Johnson and Marcus' assessment is that while some commissions have had little or no impact, a number of commissions have been effective. They conclude that the commission process has the potential to lead to positive change and improvement in higher education (pp. 72-73).

A contrary view of the value of commissions is presented by Paul Peterson (1983) who reviewed the work of six national commissions that looked at education (elementary and secondary) between 1981 and 1983. He says that when judged against the usual standards for evaluating policy analysis, these reports were disappointing. According to Peterson, they " . . . reassert what is well known, make exaggerated claims on flimsy evidence, pontificate on matters about which there could scarcely be agreement . . ." (p. 3). Peterson is a critic of the commission process itself. He does not think special commissions are likely to be effective because they are charged to study complex problems that are not easily solvable, they have no formal power, and they are made up of persons representing diverse groups who are supposed to agree on recommendations in a short time period.

Peterson examined national studies of education rather than state studies, which were the primary focus of Johnson and Marcus. National studies of education cannot limit their recommendations to the federal government which is a minor player with limited influence on many aspects of education. Instead they must find ways to address a diverse group of states and institutions that have the responsibility for education. To get a message across to a majority of the 50 states and 3,000 higher education institutions requires substantial media coverage and attention. Reports must be newsworthy and may need to exaggerate and dramatize to make their point. If recommendations in the report are too specific, many in the educational audience may "tune out" because the report is not seen as applicable to the situation in their state or their institution. Education is an important item on state agendas, but it is seldom an important issue on the national agenda.

State-level commissions have a more manageable job--they can address a few specific audiences who have responsibility for implementation--the governor, the legislature, the state higher education agency, the institutions. If the commission is appointed by the governor or legislature, it is less dependent on the media to get its recommendations to the key decision makers in the state. Most states are small enough so that influential

persons who are appointed to commissions have ready access to the governor and legislators on a personal basis. Clearly, state blue ribbon commissions are more likely to have an impact than national ones.

The problems that state commissions must address vary in specificity, but most of them have a broad scope of inquiry. A typical charge is: "to study the needs of the state for higher education and the most effective way of providing high quality education within the resources available to the state." A majority of the commissions have some specific issues or problems to examine within their broad charge; among the most common are the governance structure of higher education, finance, and institutional mission, role and scope.

Governance structure is often on the agenda of a commission inquiry. The state agency and the institutional or system boards have vested interests in the continuation of the existing system. Therefore, an impartial commission is required to examine the structure. The frequent appearance and the controversy over governance as an issue of special studies is due to the conflict between state desires to establish a state "system" of higher education and the strong traditions of institutional autonomy. There is continuing tension about the amount and type of control that the state should exercise, and the appropriate accountability and responsibility of each public institution. (Clark, 1985). This is a complex issue that has no clear political solution, and predictably reappears as an issue when other problems, such as money shortages or pressure for quality improvement arise. Under adverse conditions, special commissions tend to look at new governance structures as possible cures or solutions to their troubles.

To understand the dynamics of special commissions eleven special studies that occurred in the seven subject states between 1979 and 1985 (each state had at least one) were examined. See Tables One and Two in Chapter I for a summary. Six are described in detail because all but one were comprehensive, they all evaluated the performance of both the state agency and the state system, and they all made recommendations that could be used to evaluate their impact. In each case, a little of the political context is provided to enable the reader to understand the background of the evaluation. A knowledge of the issues and political environment that led to the special study is essential to understanding the later impact, or lack thereof, of the commission's recommendations.

Colorado

Colorado has a complex system of governance. The University of Colorado has a constitutional elected board of regents, and

there are five other governing boards for higher education in the state, with the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) serving as a coordinating board. The legislature is very active in oversight of higher education, with many procedural controls on higher education that operate primarily through the budget process. The governor presents an executive budget, but the legislature frequently rewrites it; the legislature dominates the budget process.

The CCHE was established in 1965 and was strengthened in 1970. It was almost abolished in 1975, when it had its budget cut in half. A new director in 1976 rebuilt relationships with the legislature, and the commission's influence grew in the late 1970's and early 1980's. With this growing influence came more frequent clashes with the institutions, particularly with the University of Colorado. The Colorado legislature has been fiscally conservative, and funding increases for higher education have been little more (and sometimes less) than inflation in most of the years of the past decade. The legislators have been concerned with the amount of duplication of programs, with competition between institutions for funds, and with the number of small institutions outside the major population centers of Denver, Colorado Springs and Ft. Collins.

Colorado was the first state to enact sunset legislation (see Chapter IV) and in 1977 the Colorado Commission on Higher Education was scheduled for a sunset review in 1982. The sunset process which Colorado followed has been described earlier; it included a separate review of the agency by the Legislative Audit Council and a review by an outside group chosen by the CCHE which included former members of the legislature. That outside review produced favorable recommendations for continuation of the coordinating board, but it also included a recommendation to the legislature that the governance arrangements in the state be studied and, if possible, simplified. The independent review by the legislative auditor recommended the continuation of the CCHE, but also suggested that the legislature review the governance arrangements in higher education with the objective of making them more efficient and accountable.

At about the same time, a downturn in oil prices affected Colorado's revenues and heightened the legislators' interest in achieving a more economical operation of the higher education system. Many political leaders and some educational leaders believed that changes were needed, but there was no consensus on what those changes should be.

Representative Schauer was a member of the Legislative Audit Committee, and he became interested in the issue of governance in Colorado. In 1984, he introduced a bill to reorganize higher education under a single governing board. There were extensive hearings on the topic, and it became clear that there were other

problems to consider in addition to governance. It was also obvious that there was not much support among the educators for the notion of a single governing board. The bill could not pass, so the legislature authorized an interim citizens' study committee to examine the Colorado higher education system paying particular attention to ways that a streamlined governance structure might improve the use of resources and advance the quality of Colorado's higher education system.

The members of the committee included Representative Schauer and eight other citizens who were drawn from different areas of the state. Three were appointed by the senate, three by the house, and three by the governor. They had seven months to complete their work and report to the next session of the legislature. The chairman was acknowledged by nearly all respondents as an outstanding choice who shaped the work of the commission in a positive direction. The committee had an experienced staff. It was drawn in part from the staff of the CCHE and in part from the legislative audit staff; limited use was made of consultants from the Education Commission of the States. The CCHE endorsed the importance of the Citizens Study Committee, and indicated a willingness to go out of business if the study committee felt that would help implement a better pattern for governing higher education. Thus, CCHE's disinterest in fighting a reorganization or governance change greatly reduced the political problems faced by the Study Commission. The commission held a number of public hearings around the state, and issued in January of 1985 a sixty-page report which dealt broadly with the future of higher education in the state.

The commission adopted four major goals which they sought to fulfill through their recommendations.

> Our recommendations are driven by educational and management judgments rather than by what might be politically most feasible. We have no doubt that implementation of our recommendations will substantially improve the current situation. We urge that our recommendations and all competing options be evaluated against the four major goals.

First, the proposal must clarify the purposes of educational institutions through differentiated roles and missions.

Secondly, the proposal must provide responsibility for developing statewide policies linked with the necessary authority and the accountability for implementing those policies.

Third, the proposal must enable and encourage decentralized management of education by providing a decisive process for

resolving conflict based on sound educational and management criteria.

Fourth, the proposal must provide mutuality in the commitment by the educational community to quality, access, diversity, efficiency, and accountability in exchange for commitment by the citizens of Colorado to adequate funding."

The commission organized its recommendations into those directed to the legislature, and those directed to the governing authority. The legislative recommendations called for creation of a single governing board with management boards for each campus, legislative definition of the broad role and mission of each institution, and revision of the funding formula to provide flexibility and to reduce the emphasis on student enrollment as the basis for funding.

The recommendations directed to the governing authority dealt with improving the quality of higher education, providing management flexibility and increased accountability at the institutional level, and assuring good communication and institutional participation in the development of state education policy.

The recommendations were included in a new bill introduced by Representative Schauer in 1985. The subsequent legislative hearings made it was clear there still was not a consensus for a single board. The bill was modified to re-establish a new, strengthened CCHE with increased authority to terminate existing programs. Most of the other recommendations of the Citizens Committee were included in the legislative mandate to the new CCHE, while making it clear that CCHE was a policy board that should not get involved in institutional management.

A fairly high proportion of the recommendations of the study commission were adopted in the legislation for the stronger coordinating board. There were several factors responsible for this. The chairman and the special commission members worked hard at understanding the position of major groups on the key issues in higher education. Secondly, they had a senior, experienced staff who knew the issues, what information was available, and who could facilitate the work of the special study commission. Third, there was a feeling on the part of legislative leadership that it was time for a change. The governance, role and mission duplication, and financing were issues that had been part of the political and educational agenda in Colorado for several years, and people wanted to settle them and move ahead. A fourth reason that the commission's recommendations were influential was that the CCHE itself supported the idea of change and was willing to be abolished if that was in the best interest of the state. The executive director of CCHE had left the state before the study began. The

president of the University of Colorado, who had opposed some CCHE proposals had also resigned. There was a clean slate in terms of much of the leadership in the state. At the time that the new CCHE began its work under its new legislative mandate, there were no public four-year university or college presidents in the state who had been in their position for more than three years.

To summarize, the political and educational environment was right for a change. None of the key groups fought changes except for the idea of a single governing board. The issues before the study commission were central policy questions about the future direction and role and mission of institutions. The issues had been extensively debated and people were ready to resolve them and move on. The outcome of this particular study commission was positive for the state and a citizens' commission was the right process to address these issues given the history and political environment in the state.

Florida

Florida is a state with ambitions to be in the top nationally in most areas, including higher education. It is also a state with no income tax, and as a result it has below-average tax capacity and tax effort which provides limited public resources with which to fulfill its ambitions.

This background is important in understanding the events that led up to a 1979 study by a joint legislative and gubernatorial blue ribbon commission which reported a set of recommendations to the 1980 Legislature.

The special commission was generated by discussions about the role and mission of the new universities in south and central Florida that were built in the 60's and early 70's. The older established University of Florida and Florida State are in the northern and less populated part of the state. They faced increasing competition from the four newer universities in central and south Florida for already inadequate tax revenues. In addition there was the concern that undergraduate education wasn't as good as it needed to be. To make Florida a national leader, there needed to be more attention on quality improvement at all of the institutions.

Florida state government has more sectional politics than many states; the many newcomers to the state have more allegiance to their local area than they do to the state as a whole. It is also a large state with a substantial investment (in the last 20 years) in planning, evaluation, and modern "rational" management procedures in higher education. It has been a leader among the states in building a sizeable professional staff for its

legislature, and in attracting professionals to executive branch agencies.

Sectional politics and comprehensive statewide planning and management make a contentious mixture, and this has been most evident in higher education. The Board of Regents, as the governing board for the nine senior universities, developed a plan in 1970 for growth and development of higher education. This plan did not satisfy the four new central and south Florida universities or their legislative supporters. Agreement was not possible on clear role and mission delineations. Two of the new universities were upper division only (i.e. they had no freshmen or sophomores); they grew much less than had been projected, and the universities and their legislators were now pushing for broader missions and the addition of freshmen and sophomore students.

Feeling that the Board of Regents was biased in favor of the older established universities, legislators from south Florida proposed legislation in 1978 to abolish the Board of Regents and set up local boards with the idea that each institution might do better with a locally guided development effort. The governor and some of the state leaders were opposed to this idea, and the proposed legislation to abolish the Board was sent to a Joint Legislative-Executive Study Commission. The twenty-one member commission was made up of a combination of citizens and legislators, many of whom had strong opinions and well-formed interests in one or another possible solutions. The commission staff was from the governor's office, the legislative staff, and the Department of Education staff. In addition, it contracted with the Academy for Educational Development to do a study and develop recommendations about several major issues. The Commission was charged to look at what the state needed in higher education, institutional roles and missions, funding and funding procedures, how quality of the system might be enhanced, as well as governance. All this was to be done in a six-month period.

The outside consultant group, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), developed a report that dealt with the questions facing the Joint Executive-Legislative Commission: "State Needs and Institutional Role and Scope," "Financing Postsecondary Education in Florida," "Quality and How It Can Be Improved," and finally "The Governance of Postsecondary Education." This last part of the report by the Academy consultants was the most controversial part. The Academy's recommendations reflected the influence of state politics, especially about whether there should be individual boards and whether the Board of Regents should be abolished. Some of the members of the Commission had expected the AED report to include a recommendation for local board governance, but it did not. Instead it outlined the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches and left the Commission the job of resolution.

Because the Academy study was believed to be influenced politically, it lost credibility, particularly with some of the key professionals who staffed the Executive-Legislative Commission. They felt that the role of the outside consultants was to lay out the facts and recommendations objectively, and not respond to political pressures. The Executive-Legislative Commission issued its own report about a month later. It recommended the continuation of the Board of Regents, but also the establishment of a new Postsecondary Planning Commission that would assist the constitutional State Board of Education. In Florida, the Cabinet (which is the governor, and six other elected state officials) serves as the State Board of Education, responsible for all levels of education including the universities, community colleges, and K-12. Recommendations for financing and for the future role and mission of each institution were also put forward by the study commission.

Implementation of the recommendations was impacted by financial considerations. In Florida, the state has allocated between ten and eleven percent of total state tax revenues to higher education during most of the preceding two decades. These funds have grown at about the rate of the overall state economy, but since Florida has no personal income tax, tax revenues reflect a relatively low total tax effort. Meanwhile, the fact of slow growth of new revenue meant that if the new universities in south Florida got more of the pie, the existing universities in north Florida would get less. The recommendations of the commission did not alter this basic funding predicament, and the recommendation to move from an enrollment-based funding to a program-based funding has been only partially implemented. At the same time, the report responded to the south Florida pressures by indicating that there should be a plan for a comprehensive doctoral level university in the southeastern part of Florida. This was to be accomplished by combining the efforts of two public universities with the University of Miami. Seven years later, this plan is now being implemented with supplemental funding for the two public universities, although the funding level for the total system remains at nearly the same percentage level.

If Florida were to provide adequate funds, it could have five or six comprehensive, nationally-recognized universities, a top-notch community college system, and first class public schools. But given the funding constraints and the political strength of the central and south Florida areas, the gap between aspirations and resources will continue.

The commission's recommendations did lead to the establishment of a new Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) to serve the Cabinet Board of Education. PEPC has had considerable success in getting the important policy problems on the agenda of the governor and legislature, and

progress has been made in some areas including clarification (seven years after the commission's recommendations) of the role and missions of the southeast Florida institutions. Higher education's relative funding position in the state budget has not improved.

The Florida experience suggests that citizen committees may be ineffective in making recommendations about funding, because funding changes require new political commitments on the part of the public, legislators and governors. Citizen committees can bring fiscal issues into focus in the public debate, but it is not realistic in most situations to expect much change from blue ribbon commission recommendations about financing.

The Florida study made extensive use of outside experts; the Commission not only had a major contract with the Academy for Educational Development, it also brought in other consultants to critique the AED recommendations. Respondents did not rate the contribution of the outside consultants very highly. The problems the Commission faced were not technical, but political--how much is the state willing to spend on higher education, and how local aspirations for higher education in politically influential metropolitan areas can be satisfied. With these kinds of problems, the potential for outside consultants to make much of a contribution is limited. In the judgment of the respondents, the Joint Legislative and Executive Commission was at least partially successful in suggesting a new way to work on the problems.

Washington

Of all the special studies examined, a special study of education in Washington had the most comprehensive charge (to look at all levels of education), took the longest time (two and one-half years), and cost the most money (over a million dollars--most of it from private sources). If bigger is better, this should be the most influential of the studies presented.

This study began when the state of Washington had been in an economic recession for several years. Washington had a tradition of progressive state government and a lot of citizen participation, but recent economic problems had increased fiscal conservativeness. Consultation and participation are emphasized in Washington and special study commissions are common. The legislature has also developed a substantial professional staff who tend to be non-partisan, and often move between executive and legislative employment. Olympia, as more than one respondent pointed out, is a small town, government is still conducted on a personal basis, and people (and agencies) develop reputations which strongly influence their effectiveness with other parts of state government.

Higher education has been a budget priority in Washington, and as a result, the University of Washington has developed as one of the best universities in the nation. A large community college system contributed to a relatively high college attendance rate. Statewide coordination of higher education is a recent activity. A strong tradition of institutional autonomy exists and a coordinating board was established primarily as a planning agency with only advisory powers. There was also a pattern of active legislative involvement in educational policy-making in higher education. About half of the initial coordinating board were legislators or institutional representatives. It was a large and somewhat unwieldy body. Its early and limited success is attributed to the skill of its first director (Jim Furman), to the caliber of the initial board appointees, and to the support of the governor and the legislature. In 1975, the coordinating board was reorganized as the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), and most institutional members and all the legislative members were removed, making it primarily a citizen board. The CPE had a limited role in budgeting and was primarily a planning board that had to rely on persuasion rather than regulatory power to resolve program conflicts between institutions.

The downturn in the Washington economy in the late 70's made it increasingly difficult to deal with problems. A succession of one-term governors contributed to political uncertainty about state higher educational policy-making. The legislature was interested in having higher education operate in a more efficient manner and was frustrated with the CPE because it seemed unable to resolve turf conflicts between institutions. As the 1980's began, these pressures and concerns about the effectiveness of higher education led to several simultaneous evaluations and recommendations.

Some members of the Washington legislature were concerned that higher education and elementary/secondary education were competing for scarce state dollars, and there was no objective overview or a road map for education. These legislators wanted a comprehensive study that focused on goals, roles of various institutions and sectors, and program financing. They authorized a Temporary Committee on Educational Policies, Structure, and Management in 1982. Initially, it was perceived that much of the study would focus on higher education, but at the time it was authorized the national interest was shifting very sharply toward the problems of effective education in the elementary/secondary schools. The Temporary Committee wound up using a majority of its time and effort on elementary/secondary education. The Temporary Committee also examined teacher education and did address some questions of governance and finance and program quality in higher education. However, the majority of its 53 recommendations dealt with elementary/secondary matters and the problems of improving the public schools.

The committee had 17 members--13 appointed by the governor and four legislative members (one Democrat and Republican from the Senate and one Democrat and Republican from the House). Most of the funding for the study was raised externally. The initial legislative appropriation was for $25,000 with an additional $100,000 matching any private contributions. The staff director, Dr. William Chance, had been in state government in Washington for more than a decade with the CPE and was knowledgeable about state higher education operations.

The Temporary Committee spent a good deal of its first year's existence collecting information and arranging for some external studies and obtaining the additional funds necessary to carry out a comprehensive study. It made an interim report in 1984 and a final report in January of 1985. The charge to the Temporary Committee was broad: to "investigate thoroughly the entire educational complex in Washington state." In addition, they were asked to examine the following specific issues:

> coordination, needs of students and response to those needs, the role and missions of the components, educational diversity and independence, obstacles to orderly student progression, open access, efficiency, duplication, accreditation, graduation and entrance requirements from high school to postsecondary, efficient uses of the public dollars, ways to improve the system possibly through managerial reorganization or combining of components, accountability of the various levels, student achievement, and a determination of what constitutes good instruction.

With this broad and detailed charge, it is not surprising that the commission's work took two and one-half years to complete.

Most of the people who evaluated the work of the Temporary Committee felt that it had too broad a charge and, as a result, made too many wide-ranging recommendations. Respondents thought it had some impact on elementary/secondary education, but limited influence on higher education.

There is an important problem in assessing the Temporary Commission's impact. There were three other studies under way at the same time as the Temporary Committee, each dealing with higher education governance, finance, and the roles and missions of institutions. The first of these was a sunset review of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) which is described in the previous chapter. The sunset report was issued at about the same time that the Temporary Committee report was issued, and there were similarities in the way the two reports evaluated

governance arrangements. The Temporary Committee had sponsored a special study of governance of higher education by Lyman Glenny and Frank Bowen of the University of California. This study pointed out weaknesses in the existing pattern of operation of the CPE, and made a number of suggestions about ways that it could be strengthened as a policy board. These ideas were present in some of the other reports, although each study made its own recommendations in its own terms.

In addition to the Temporary Committee and sunset review, two other studies were done by special Senate and House committees which included lay members. The Senate Committee was organized and chaired by Senator Nita Rinehart, who had the University of Washington in her Seattle district. Senator Rinehart was also a member of the committee that provides oversight to the Legislative Audit Council, so she was familiar with the sunset review of the Council on Postsecondary Education. The major purpose of her committee was to make a new recommendation for governance if the sunset audit put the CPE out of business. Senator Rinehart wanted the recommendations to be acceptable to higher education, and therefore involved representatives from the colleges and universities extensively in hearings and in developing recommendations. Higher education leaders were uneasy about the possibility of a single "super board" an idea which was appealing to some members of the legislature.

The House Committee was organized and headed by Representative Helen Sommers, and it also developed a governance proposal to substitute for the CPE if it were abolished. Each committee also examined other issues, but the question of governance was the primary topic. In describing their committees, both Rinehart and Sommers identified them as legislative committees; they involved educators to meet the Washington traditions of citizen participation. They used the regular committee staff of the Senate and House Education Committees as staff to the special studies. The Temporary Committee was described as a citizens committee, even though it had four legislative members. The difference was in the control of the recommendations.

So, there were four different study and evaluation groups looking at the governance issue. The Temporary Committee had recommendations from its outside consultants; the others relied on public hearings and staff work to develop their recommendations. The consultants' report to the Temporary Committee was the first recommendation to be made public; that being a call for a strengthened coordination and state higher education policy process. The sunset review recommended the termination of the old board and the creation of a more effective coordinating mechanism without specifying in detail what that might be. The two legislative committees produced similar

recommendations about a new coordinating board with closer ties to the legislative process. The legislative committees' recommendations were successfully combined into a single bill which scheduled the old board to be phased out January 1, 1986, and a new board to begin work the same day.

It is possible to identify similarities between the final outcome and the recommendations of the Temporary Committee, but participants in the process give different assessments of the actual impact which the Temporary Committee had on the final legislative action. In part, that is because legislators like to take the credit for whatever legislation is passed, and while they may borrow freely from ideas that are presented in other reports, they necessarily want to identify them as their own, particularly if the bill is seen as a good one after it passes. Most neutral respondents, those who were not associated with either the Temporary Committee or the legislative committees, felt the citizen committee had modest influence and that some of the ideas that it presented were incorporated into the final legislation; however they also believe the final legislation might have looked about the same even without the work of the temporary committee. The legislators were engaged in a typical incremental-political process, finding a consensus that "satisfices" the major interest groups.

As one informant put it to us, an important role of citizen committees is to get new ideas on the agenda. For those ideas to go anywhere, they must be picked up by legislators who make them their own and who then can claim credit for whatever outcome occurs. Thus, it is difficult to trace the impact of the Temporary Committee in Washington, in part because it produced a very broad report with many recommendations, and in part because there were so many other groups involved in considering the same issue in the same time period. Several respondents felt that the Temporary Committee had too broad a charter from the legislature. Also contributing to its limited impact was the length of time taken to produce its report and recommendations. The governor who had appointed it had gone out of office and the new governor had just entered office when the report came out in 1985, and the new governor felt no sense of ownership.

A 1986 legislative assessment of the impact of the recommendations from the Temporary Committee showed that only about ten percent of the fifty recommendations resulted in legislation of a positive sort. This, of course, is just a first-year effect. It was more revealing that this analysis indicated that the legislature did not have any serious discussion of about half of the recommendations. It seems likely that, as one legislator put it, the Temporary Committee had an overload of recommendations. He felt that the legislature could only focus on a few issues at a time and a comprehensive reform

package was not something that the Washington legislature was prepared to deal with at the time that the report came out.

The impact of the Temporary Committee also should be assessed in relation to the political environment: a recession with high unemployment for several years; a succession of one-term governors; and considerable change in legislative leadership. There was no clear political leadership ready to take up a comprehensive education agenda.

Given all this, the Temporary Committee's impact may have been about as great as it is reasonable to expect. The committee members were influential and had a competent staff, although its political connections were seen as both assets and liabilities. It had some impact on the thinking of leadership in the state--but more on elementary/secondary education than on higher education. The environment was not right for a major change in higher education, and most people assess the committee's role as one of background rather than proximate influence in the changes that finally took place in the state in 1985 and 1986.

Idaho

In 1978 Idaho's version of property tax limitation, Proposition One, known as the One Percent Initiative, was approved. As a consequence, the local taxes available for elementary/secondary education declined, and significantly more state resources had to be diverted to the public schools. The higher education portion of the state's general fund appropriation dropped from 22% to almost 15% in five years. Higher education suffered even more when an economic downturn hit the state. Between 1980 and 1984 Idaho was next to the bottom among the states in the growth of state and local appropriations. Constant dollar appropriations per student declined more than 21%.

By the early 1980's there was concern that the Idaho State Board of Education. which governs the four public senior institutions, might be jeopardizing the quality of higher education by trying to conduct business as usual in the face of declining resources.

A group of prominent citizens in the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry (IACI) obtained private funding to form a study commission. The IACI appointed 35 members including four legislators, several college presidents, and many prestigious businessmen. A fifteen-person advisory group included a representative from the governor's office and the current and preceding executive directors of higher education of the State Board of Education. The study group then hired a team of consultants from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) to

undertake the staff work and to prepare its own set of recommendations. The ECS Report appeared in March 1983.

After holding eight public meetings with over 370 citizens appearing to testify, IACI issued its own report in November 1983. It largely agreed with the ECS report. The recommendations were to separate a strong Board for Higher Education from the State Board of Education, to expand the community colleges beyond the two already in existence, and finally, to generate more state money for higher faculty salaries, better building maintenance, and a needs-based student aid program to compensate for charging students higher tuition. Higher admission standards and better definition of institutional role and mission were also recommended.

The IACI Report got caught in a political cross-fire as legislators introduced a bill to raise business taxes as a way of funding the recommendations for higher education. The IACI then lobbied to defeat the tax proposal while the IACI study group was urging the state to spend more money on higher education.

Also, the report made a number of recommendations for major changes, and these drew active opposition from several groups, each attacking a different recommendation. Eventually, the objecting groups stopped any significant progress toward implementation of the IACI recommendations.

The membership mixture was judged by most respondents to have been adequate, but several commented on other possible weaknesses in the process:

1. The in-state legislative members were seen to be favorably biased toward education before the study and therefore lacked credibility with fellow legislators who were critical of higher education.

2. There was some mild resentment of out-of-state experts and their criticism of Idaho's system of higher education.

3. Even though there was a member of the governor's office on the advisory group, several respondents reported the governor's office did not work hard for the changes. Incidentally, Idaho several times had a strong, conservative, Republican majority in both houses and a Democratic governor; not a formula destined to produce much legislation or to let the governor operate independently.

Idaho interviewees believe that the bedrock problems were political rather than educational. Respondents emphasized the degree of regional factionalism in Idaho: north Idaho tends to be Democratic and to protect Lewis and Clark State College; southwest Idaho has population and economic power that is

bitterly resented by the rest of the state; and southeast Idaho is a Mormon stronghold that often looks more to Utah than to Idaho for higher education services and therefore is politically reluctant to support increased costs for higher education.

Furthermore, elementary/secondary education is well organized and influential in Idaho. The elected superintendent of public instruction ensures that elementary/secondary education gets its "share" of any tax increase. (The present superintendent, it must be said, has not used his voting membership on the State Board of Education to force funding issues into an "either/or" elementary/secondary or higher education context.) Idaho is a state with a very small population and the number of people who are influential in higher education constitutes a small network. A few individuals can block action by their opposition.

The IACI report is a good example of the difficulty of implementing blue ribbon commission recommendations for funding changes. Since the IACI Commission was not appointed by either the governor or legislature, they were not committed to work for the recommendations. In addition, when the IACI as an organization opposed the business tax increase, this neutralized the interest group support for the recommendations.

Although not many of the IACI recommendations were implemented, several observers urged caution in declaring the mixed blue ribbon/outside consultant process a failure. They felt that one needed a longer timetable in evaluating reports that appeared in 1983, for the policy process in Idaho moves to a slower beat. As evidence, they cite that both the Northwest Regional Accreditation Report (described earlier in Chapter III) and a 1986 legislative committee report on higher education appeared to build on IACI recommendations. So the seeds for useful policy changes may have been planted and may yet produce fruit.

Outside Consultant Reviews

The final two state studies to be examined in detail were not "blue ribbon" study commissions. Each study was done by an out-of-state consultant group. In the case of West Virginia, the consultant group reported to and was hired by the legislature. Some members of the legislature had been unhappy with the role of the Board of Regents, and wanted an examination of the governance issues. This was the most narrowly focused of the study examples included in this report.

In South Carolina, the outside consultant group was hired by the Commission on Higher Education to do a comprehensive study of the system. The South Carolina legislature funded the study, and

also put some constraints on the scope of the study (it was not to consider any mergers of institutions). The basic mandate for the study came from the S.C. Commission on Higher Education, which was serving as its own "blue ribbon" commission.

West Virginia

The West Virginia Board of Regents is a consolidated governing board created in 1969. The board had several clashes with both the state government and the institutions during its early years. Governor Moore, who had appointed the original Regents, became critical of the group when it opposed his proposals to create a second medical school at Marshall University and to incorporate the private Greenbrier School of Osteopathy as a third medical school in the state system. The governor's wishes prevailed, but not until a divisive disagreement had occurred.

At an early point in the new board's existence, the chancellor of the new board sent out the word that institutions (particularly West Virginia University), were no longer to engage in "end-runs" around the board by lobbying for more appropriations. Presidents who had previously enjoyed direct access to political decision-makers did not welcome such constraints. The remainder of the 1970's found the state board struggling with both substantive agendas and procedural relations with its constituents.

Although the Board had published two state plans in 1972 and 1979, had created a set of community colleges, and had provided funds to restore the accreditation standing of several public colleges with library problems, key legislators felt that the Board's ten-year anniversary in 1979 was a good time to evaluate its effectiveness and therefore hired the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to undertake this task.

The AED report's major recommendation was to abolish the Board of Regents and create in its place a state coordinating board, with governing boards for each of the three public segments: the university system, the state colleges, and the community colleges. This recommendation was based partly on a lengthy section of the report analyzing (without particular reference to West Virginia) the general strengths of state coordinating boards as compared to state governing boards, and partly on a set of criticisms of the operating style and functions of the existing Board of Regents.

In addition, the AED report provided 23 recommendations to improve the Board's operations in case the legislature chose to reject the primary option and keep the Regents in place. The Board itself urged the rejection of the primary recommendation

but indicated that it found no trouble with the 23 improvement ideas.

In 1981, a law passed strengthening the Board of Regents and implementing several of the AED recommendations--in particular, that the Institutional Advisory Boards be made statutory and given more delegated powers, mandating the program evaluation process by which all existing programs would be evaluated every five years, and mandating an explicit master planning process with broad participation by faculty, students and professional staff. As a consequence, the Board published its third state plan, Agenda for Action, in 1985 and it seemed to involve widespread participation as recommended. In 1982, the Regents published Policy Bulletin No. 11 which required the evaluation of all programs every five years. Policy Bulletin No. 59 in 1981 implemented the AED recommendation to evaluate campus presidents at least once every four years.

The present Board of Regents is involved in planning, program evaluation, and presidential evaluation along the lines that the AED recommended and those which were put into the '81 law. To that extent the out-of-state report was moderately successful in improving the Board of Regents despite the fact that its primary Option 1 was rejected.

But the evaluation of the AED role cannot stop there, for as mentioned earlier in Chapter III, the West Virginia performance audit staff relied heavily on the AED report and subsequent Board reactions when the performance audit report was undertaken in 1984. The influence of the report could be seen five years later. Again, it is clear that the assessment of the impact of most special studies should be generous in its time frame.

South Carolina

South Carolina is a relatively small state with a complex system of higher education. There are two comprehensive universities, a medical university (plus a second medical school at the University of South Carolina), several state colleges, several two- and four-year branch campuses of the University of South Carolina, plus a system of two-year vocational schools. The system has added a private institution and a municipal college to the state system in recent years. There are a number of private institutions that benefit from a state tuition equalization grant program. The system is coordinated by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) which has limited regulatory powers.

The South Carolina economy has been growing, and the state has supported its higher education system relatively well compared to other states with similar levels of income. But

there is also a feeling among some state leaders that the available dollars have been spread among too many institutions, and that there is excessive program duplication.

In 1985 the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) persuaded the legislature to appropriate $350,000 for a comprehensive evaluation of higher education, to be done by consultants from outside the state. This was not a blue ribbon commission study. The CHE was the key group that received the consultants' report, and the CHE was responsible for presenting the report to the legislature, governor, and the public, and for whatever implementation occurred.

The study was designed to conduct a comprehensive broad-based review of higher education in the state and to project needs for the next decade. The CHE thus got an objective look from an outside group of experts, but as the citizen group responsible for the study, CHE brought its existing assets and liabilities to bear on the job of getting support for the recommendations.

The study was planned because the Commission wanted to seize the initiative and present a comprehensive plan for improvement. State government in South Carolina is conducted primarily on a personal basis, and sectional interests are strong. There is a small professional staff for the legislature, and education has a strong tradition of institutional autonomy from state oversight. Legislators not only appoint most of the higher education board members, but also serve on several higher education campus boards. The CHE was established in 1967 and initially had institutional representatives on the Board who were removed in the 1978 reorganization. Currently one-third of the 18 CHE members are appointed by the governor from nominees of the legislators from each congressional district. The other two-thirds are appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the legislators from the appointee's congressional district. This appointment process keeps local interests at the forefront, and makes it hard to develop a statewide perspective.

The CHE has had a mixed record of influence on the development of higher education policy. CHE's efforts to prevent program duplication in expensive areas like medicine and engineering were unsuccessful, and the Commission was subjected to frequent end runs to the legislature by institutions when the CHE tried to reduce program duplication. Some legislators think higher education is over-built and has too much program duplication, but local interests have been able to block CHE efforts to deal with duplication, especially in health education and two-year occupational education.

Governor Riley, who served from 1978 to 1986, was a strong advocate for improved schools and for education reform, and had

won a tax increase for a comprehensive public school reform program in 1983. Higher education did not benefit much from the increased tax revenues; the level of support for South Carolina higher education among the southern states was better than the South Carolina support for the public schools, and the governor and legislature felt it was the public schools' turn.

Fred Sheheen was the key figure in getting the outside evaluation funded and organized. He became chairman of the CHE in 1983, and served as chair until his term ended in 1986. He had served on the Commission in the early 1970's and was appointed again by Governor Riley in 1979. Sheheen's brother was a key member of the House and is currently the Speaker of the House Sheheen was a supporter of Riley's elementary/secondary education initiatives, and he felt that a companion package of comprehensive higher education improvements was needed to improve the quality of higher education and complement the work that had been done at elementary/secondary level. He saw the study as a necessary basis for the Commission's development of a higher education reform package.

Sheheen was personally responsible for working with the legislature and the governor to get the $350,000 from the legislature for the study which was to look at several issues he wanted the study to examine: program duplication; the possibility for a comprehensive community college system combining the two-year branches of the University of South Carolina, with the technical schools (this part of the study was eliminated by the legislature when it appropriated the funds); quality enhancement recommendations that would parallel those in the elementary/secondary package; the role of university research in economic development, and finally, how the commission itself could become a more effective agency.

Sheheen and the Commission selected the Augenblick, Van de Water and Associates (AVA) from Denver, Colorado, to conduct the outside study, and they, in turn, selected about twenty other experts to come in and look at different facets of the state higher education system. (Both authors of this report were involved as outside consultants in this study.) The study commission staff operated much like the staff of a citizens' blue ribbon committee. They interviewed a large number of people in higher education and in the executive and legislative branches of state government. They examined several issues, commissioned a number of outside papers, and in six months (February 1986) produced a 110-page report with twenty-two recommendations to the Commission. Twelve recommendations were directed at strengthening the CHE, one of which would require additional legislation to increase the responsibility and authority of the Commission in the area of program elimination. Ten recommendations addressed ways of improving the quality of the educational programs and services in the state.

The Commission on Higher Education set up a process for implementing the recommendations and for presenting selected recommendations to the legislature. The report did not come out at a good time for implementation. Chairman Sheheen, who had been the principal advocate of the study process, was ending his term on the Commission. The Executive Director of the CHE for the past twelve years, Howard Boozer, had announced his retirement to be effective a few months after the report was received. Members of the legislature were in the middle of their final session before the 1986 election. The state was facing a downturn in revenue which was threatening the full funding of the reform packages in elementary/secondary education that had been passed two years previously. Governor Riley was in his last year as governor, and could not run to succeed himself. Nothing was done with the recommendations by the 1986 legislature.

The CHE appointed six task forces of college and university people, laymen, legislators, and commission staff to review the work of the consultants and make further recommendations aimed at reaching the 1987 legislative session. The study consultants had interviewed a number of college and university teachers and derived some suggestions from them. This had not built an adequate sense of ownership of the study for institutional leaders; and the six task force studies were designed in part to gain institutional support for the recommendations. The CHE used the six task forces to develop its own report, The Cutting Edge, which was transmitted to the governor and 1987 Legislature. During this time the CHE had an interim staff director, and a Republican, Caroll Campbell, was elected governor in November 1986. The 1987 Legislature was faced with a hold-the-line budget because of revenue short falls, and did not take any action on the study recommendations from the CHE. The timing for the CHE's comprehensive improvement program was still bad.

In summary, an objective and comprehensive study of South Carolina's higher education system was made by external consultants. The report was presented at a time when implementation was too difficult. It faced the additional problems of a weak state economy and changes in the leadership of the Commission and its staff, a new governor, and a group of institutional leaders who had no ownership and few incentives to support the recommendations. As a result, eighteen months later, there is still little evidence that many of the consultants' recommendations will be implemented, but a final evaluation must allow more time to see what develops. Fred Sheheen was named executive director of the Commission in the spring of 1987, and is renewing efforts to get public, institutional, and legislative support for the recommendations of the Commission.

Summary

A review of these six studies emphasizes the importance of situational factors in determining their impact. Five of the studies produced reports dealing with a broad range of important policy questions. The sixth report, West Virginia, was addressed primarily to the controversial governance question and the functioning of the Board of Regents.

The Commission in Washington, which took the longest amount of time and spent the most money, had an indirect influence on the subsequent change in governance, but most observers thought the change would have occurred anyway. The Washington report also was ill-timed, being presented to a new governor with uncertain interests in the issues. It was a well done study, but it had too many recommendations and was released at the wrong time. The ideas it developed about coordination were eventually reflected in the changes that were adopted by the legislature following the sunset review and the two legislative study committees.

The South Carolina report had no impartial citizen group to enhance the credibility the CHE could give it. Its report was issued at a time when the key leaders who had promoted or supported the study were about to go out of office. The economies of Washington and South Carolina were not expanding when the reports were released, and there was little opportunity for new revenue to fund new initiatives. In fact, no new taxes were being enacted in any of the states studied.

The Idaho study was sponsored by the business interests in the state and had no governmental authorization. It used outside consultants to develop a series of recommendations. Better funding for higher education was a central recommendation, but the combination of a weak state economy and a conservative legislature led to failure of the tax initiative which could have provided better funding. The business leaders in the state who had sponsored the study wound up opposing the tax increase. This study gets low marks for impact, although it raised the level of debate in Idaho on higher education issues, and some of its ideas are reflected in other reports. The lack of a governmental sponsor for the study was also a hindrance, because there wasn't sufficient "ownership" of the study by either the governor or legislators.

The West Virginia consultant study may have increased the awareness of legislators and the executive staff about options for changing the governance of higher education in the state. The study also made suggestions about making the existing system more effective and some of these were adopted by the Board. However, the report was commissioned by legislators who had adversarial relations with the Board of Regents, and the report was not a very good platform for formative suggestions to the

Board. The West Virginia study was narrowly focused on governance issues; more important questions about quality of the higher education system and finance were not examined. The study did not clarify these issues for the public agenda.

The Florida Joint Executive and Legislative Commission had more direct impact. Several of the recommendations of the study commission were adopted. A major one was the establishment of the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission (PEPC) as a comprehensive planning and policy analysis body for the state of Florida. PEPC has been a valuable addition to the governance arrangements in Florida. The commission's other recommendations about role and mission of the south Florida universities have taken longer to implement. In summary, the Joint Commission took up a set of specific issues, had good staff work, and came out with recommendations which had fair success in implementation.

The best record of implementation goes to the Colorado Study Commission on Higher Education. The study did a good job of reviewing the policy issues and needs of the state. It had only one legislator on it, but he was persuasive in introducing legislation which led to a restructuring of the CCHE and some strengthening of its responsibilities. In addition, the legislation provided an ambitious policy agenda for higher education. It remains to be seen what the long-run impact of the changes in the Commission will be for planning and policy-making in Colorado, but certainly the special Commission got high marks from nearly everyone. The Commission's report led directly to legislative action which restructured the Commission and gave it a broad policy agenda.

This review and analysis raises some questions about the Johnson and Marcus list of factors which make for an effective study.

1. Having a long time to do a study does not necessarily have a positive effect on the impact of the study. Special studies are not research projects, but are policy studies that bring the best available information to bear on the issue.

2. Outside consultants are problematic in their effect. They can be helpful in ensuring objectivity or in addressing technical problems, but some of the best staff work for commissions was done by regular state employees who were already familiar with the background, the state operations, and the issues at hand.

3. Timing of studies is critical. Even a mediocre report that appears at the opportune time may have some impact while an excellent report at the wrong time is likely to go nowhere. When there is no new money to support the recommendations, the chances

of action are reduced. When key supporting leadership goes out of office, the chances of action are reduced.

4. Special studies seem to be more suitable for examining some issues than others. Studies that have complex technical aspects are not as easy to examine with a citizens study commission as are broad matters of policy. They can redefine issues and help to develop a consensus on needed action. They can take a long-range view rather than being focused on the immediate problems.

All the study commissions examined made recommendations of one sort or another about governance issues and about the functions of the statewide agency. With the exception of the West Virginia study, each examined governance issues in a broad policy context. Governance and organizational issues are issues which commissions are usually asked to examine. This is partly because state governance of higher education is a new policy area in which arrangements are not set by historical precedent. Constructive outcomes are more likely when the governance issue is examined in the context of the broad policy objectives of the state, rather than being considered as a matter of state power and regulatory control over colleges and universities.

5. The study commissions had little impact on fiscal issues. Fiscal policy is hard to change because so many groups are involved in making decisions. The governor, several legislative committees, and multiple interest groups are interested in every outcome, and the possibility of change of any sort is limited.

6. Special studies also provide a new look at the options about an issue, and they may be able to redefine the issue in ways that enable a majority of people and interest groups to be "satisficed" and to arrive at a compromise solution. They are not good for doing new studies and collecting new evidence about issues or verifying analyses that challenge the conventional wisdom about a topic. They are usually not good for follow-up, or for any ongoing assessment process that is designed to stimulate continuing improvement.

Special studies can perform two other functions that are hard to assess. First, they can help develop a consensus among state leaders about what the important issues are. This is a necessary prerequisite to effective action about any issue. Legislators and higher education leaders sometimes talk past each other because they define the issues in very different ways. For example, one person's needless program duplication may be another person's healthy competition to prevent monopoly and complacency.

Second, a study can sensitize the public to issues that need to be on the public agenda, and can broaden the consideration of

new options for dealing with the issues. By raising the level of public discussion of issues, study commissions can sometimes set in motion other processes that may lead to action in the future. As our case studies have shown, action on recommendations may come several years after the study, after considerable discussion and interest group bargaining.

In summary, on the right issue at the right time special studies can be a catalyst for change and can have a big impact. On other issues they seem to be less effective. Special studies are not a substitute for an ongoing evaluation process that provides feedback for change and improvement.

Chapter VI

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AT THE STATE LEVEL

Comprehensive assessment of higher education on a national or state level is a recent development. Chester Finn pointed out in a Change Magazine article in 1983 that we have almost no systematic knowledge about what college graduates know, or what they can do with what they know. The initial plans for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 1969 were to have a young adult sample, but it was dropped after one assessment because of budget cuts. There are a number of indicators about the quality of entrants to college, about the coherence or lack of coherence of the curriculum, and about the resources going into education. Some of these input measures have been monitored for decades, but the lack of a strong relationship between resource measures and outcomes in terms of student learning leaves very sketchy and impressionistic picture of the effectiveness of our higher education system.

As long as the effectiveness of higher education was not in question, assessment of it was not a high priority. Polls taken of students and recent graduates have revealed fairly high levels of customer satisfaction with the college experience; college graduates have generally been able to get jobs that made college seem worthwhile. In the last decade the attention of state education leaders has shifted from concern about growth and access to concern about quality. Elementary and secondary education quality was the first target, with A Nation at Risk and several other reports. The quality of undergraduate collegiate education was the next target. Involvement in Learning (1984) was one of several national reports on the need for improvement in higher education. It recommended more attention to assessment as a guide to improvement efforts.

The national studies of undergraduate education got the attention and interest of the governors who led state education reform movements. The Governors Association report Time for Results called for comprehensive assessment of higher education to assure that institutional improvement efforts were working. In the 1980's assessment has been pushed by state leaders, more than from within the academy.

A recent ECS survey (ECS 1987) of state assessment activity indicated that nearly all the states are either doing something, planning and developing something, or discussing some sort of comprehensive higher education assessment activities. As the ECS survey points out, some states like Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, Tennessee, and South Dakota have explicit assessment programs that involve testing or other measures of educational outcomes.

Some states have built institutional and program assessment into their planning, budgeting, and mission review functions. Other states resist treating assessment separately; they consider it more appropriate to conduct assessment within a broader framework of existing policy mechanisms such as statewide master planning, mission approval, or program review ... Ohio's response is typical of this group ... "We are not focussed on assessment per se, but are dedicated to improving the quality of higher education in Ohio. To get a qualitative improvement, we will naturally get an assessment 'by-product'" (ECS, 1987, p. 2).

The kind of role states have defined for themselves in higher education planning and coordination will shape the approach they take to assessment. Ewell (1986, p. 50-51) identifies three different approaches that states have taken. One sees state assessment as an act of quality assurance, a second sees assessment" ... primarily as a way of ensuring that institutions are making improvements along a number of performance dimensions deemed important by the state." The final approach sees assessment primarily as a device to promote institutional self-improvement. The differences in conducting assessment for improvement versus assessment for accountability are illustrated by these different approaches.

If states take the quality assurance approach, they will seek common measures or indicators of institutional quality. Using elementary and secondary assessment as a model will lead the state to emphasize testing of all students in all institutions, and they tend to assess them on a narrow range of knowledge and skills. Florida's College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST) program is an example. It measures knowledge in reading, writing, and mathematics. Very few states are using the common test approach; the diversity of programs and institutions makes uniform testing an inappropriate procedure.

When the state takes the second approach to measure achievement of a broader set of state objectives that are related to quality improvement, multiple assessment procedures are needed. The objectives often include general education achievement, achievement in the major field, and employment records of graduates. Tennessee has a performance assessment program which has five different measures of institutional performance. Two of these are student achievement measures; the others include accreditation, student and employer satisfaction, and planning for academic improvement. Incentives for improving scores on each indicator are built into the budget process. New Jersey is developing multiple assessments of general education, the undergraduate major, and other goals; although they are not linking assessment results directly to the budget.

The third approach of encouraging more institutional self-evaluation gives institutions flexibility in determining

their own assessment procedures. The state requires that the institutions initiate some assessment process, and report on results to the state. States with this definition of the state role in assessment are operating in a similar mode to the accrediting process. The new demands for institutional assessment for this third group of states may not be much different than the institutions have been involved with in the past.

A state outcomes assessment process involves the sensitive area of state-institutional academic relationships. Institutions have claimed the freedom to pursue their educational objectives without any political or bureaucratic intrusions from government. This freedom is important to the university's role in advancing knowledge and in teaching without state censorship. If the state is involved in assessing academic performance of institutions, it is only a small step for the state to get involved in mandating changes in order to remedy weaknesses discovered in the assessment. Institutions fear that this might get the state to mandate curriculum changes or involve itself in inappropriate ways in the teaching and learning processes of higher education.

Even if the state observes what Clark Kerr has called the "self-denying ordinance" and refrains from any intrusion into the management of the institution, assessment results will become public knowledge, and unfavorable results can give the institution a negative image, hurting its student recruitment, its private fund raising, and possibly its appropriations. Even when the assessment is done within the framework of institutional self-improvement, the possibility of a summative use of formative assessment results can make institutions very uneasy about any state role in assessment.

State higher education agencies that are involved in implementing assessments can get caught in the middle between the state's expectations for accountability and the institution's expectation that it should set its own educational standards and procedures.

A multi-year effort to develop a comprehensive evaluation program takes time to develop because it is difficult to agree on statewide objectives, develop acceptable measures of those objectives, and decide how they will be differentially assessed in different kinds of institutions. In addition, assessment approaches will be required in vocational as compared with academic programs, and in different fields of study such as chemistry, business, and social work. A lead time of three or four years for design, development and implementation of a program of this complexity has been typical of the states like Florida, Tennessee and New Jersey that have been pioneering comprehensive programs. Even when a state can benefit from the

experience of another state's prior work, it must adapt borrowed procedures to fit its own goals, and a minimum of two or three years will probably be needed to introduce new comprehensive programs in any state.

Therefore, a review of comprehensive evaluation procedures should be possible when new programs have been implemented in enough states in different ways that provide a basis for comparison of their effectiveness.

The effectiveness of comprehensive assessment procedures in stimulating and guiding improvement depends on whether the process makes a difference at the department and classroom level. Unless assessment affects the teaching and learning process, it won't be measurable in the student outcomes.

This review of state evaluation in the seven states did not include a detailed examination of the new comprehensive evaluation procedures. Florida is the only one of the states we visited that was implementing a comprehensive process in 1985. The other six states are still in the discussion and development stages. There are about ten states, including Florida, where the state is assuming an active role in developing a comprehensive assessment program with multiple measures of institutional outcomes. Florida has been developing assessment procedures for nearly ten years. A preliminary review of Florida's comprehensive assessment process follows; a more definitive study of comprehensive assessments is planned for a later study.

Comprehensive Assessment in Florida

Florida has been developing comprehensive approaches to planning and decision making for more than two decades. Because the state was growing rapidly, the need for planning was clearer than in many other states. The state developed an early plan for community colleges which led to a comprehensive statewide development. Florida was and is a national leader in community colleges which are designed as the primary access to higher education in that state. Florida also added six new public universities to the three that the state had at the end of World War II. The new universities were planned to complement the community college system, and the 2 + 2 concept made four of the six new universities only upper division and graduate.

Florida is also ambitious to have a high quality system that will enhance the economic development of the state. A model for Florida has been the University of California with its nine campuses. Florida also had nine campuses in its state system, and aspired to have one or more of them recognized as peers of U.C. Berkeley or UCLA.

Another factor that led to the development of assessment were questions on the part of some legislators about the basic skills ability of undergraduates in the Florida system. Legislative concern about basic skills arose several years before attention to quality became a national issue. It led to the development of the College Level Academic Skills Test (CLAST), an exam given at the end of the sophomore year that tests basic academic skills. Students have to pass the exam to be admitted to the junior year in any of the public universities.

Education leaders also developed the goal of being in the top quartile nationally in education, including higher education, and promoted this goal to the governor and legislature. In order to determine where Florida education was in relation to the top quartile goal, Florida began in 1981 to develop a set of indicators of quality by which elementary/secondary education, community colleges, and universities could be assessed. After more than a year of development a set of 21 quality indicators was developed for the universities. They included four output measures (for example; test results, follow-up studies of graduates) nine input measures (dollars per student, admissions test results, earned degrees of faculty, etc.), seven process measures (achieving specialized accreditation, achievement of equal access goals, etc.), and one opinion measure (national rank of school or program on peer ratings).

These indicators are assessed each year and an annual report is made to the governor and legislature. There are problems with developing quality indicators. Information in comparable form for output measures is not available for other states, so Florida can only compare itself on input and on some process measures to see if it is in the top quartile of states.

When comparative measures for other states are not available, Florida can compare each institution's progress with its past record, or with other in-state institutions that have similar programs and objectives. For example, institutions can be compared on the achievement of general education objectives, but these comparisons have to be adjusted for the ability level of the entering students. Diversity of institutional purposes, programs, and students make all of these comparisons difficult and subject to misinterpretation.

Some of the indicators, such as Graduate Record Exam scores, are very general, and give an institution little guidance about the programs or disciplines that need to improve performance. As a guide to institutional self-improvement they are of limited value.

The impetus for the indicators of progress came from the State Board of Education and the legislature. The Commissioner of Education was committed to develop indicators of progress for

elementary/secondary education. He insisted that higher education develop a similar set and that they include output as well as input and process indicators. Since in the Florida system the Board of Regents for the nine universities is ultimately responsible to the State Board of Education their participation in the development of the indicators was mandatory.

One motivation for institutions to participate in the indicator project is the hope that improvement of the indicators will cause the legislature to take a more positive attitude and give higher education more money. Since the indicators are not linked directly to budget allocations in any way, the effect of indicator changes on appropriations to higher education is indirect and problematic. The evidence is that higher education has not changed its percentage share of the state budget up or down by very much in recent years. Under these conditions we should expect institutions to regard indicators as bureaucratic requirements (which they are) more than as guides to improvement or change.

The Florida Board of Regents also developed a program review process more than a decade ago. All programs in the nine universities are assessed on a periodic cycle. The reviews by outside consultants can lead to program modification, increased resources for program improvement and in selected cases, program termination. This process is linked to the planning cycle, and to institutional role and mission determination. It has had a direct effect on resources and on institutional actions, and is a type of evaluation which can be useful both for institutional self-improvement and for state-level resource allocation and planning decisions.

The Florida legislature wants to see planning, budgeting and evaluation processes linked at the institutional and state level. The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission develops a statewide plan that includes all sectors of postsecondary education, universities, private institutions, community colleges and vocational education. Planning objectives are used in the budget development and review process by the Governor and the legislature. Evaluative data from the CLAST program, from the indicators project, from the statewide program reviews can all be used as input for budget decision making. Institutions take these assessments seriously, but the jury is still out on their impact on system improvement. A future review will be able to examine these issues in more detail, both from the state perspective and from the perspective of the institutions, faculty, and students.

Respondents in Florida gave these different assessment activities a mixed review. While they generally accepted the state role in comprehensive assessment as legitimate, several persons were quick to point out that indicators had real

potential for misinterpretation, and gave at best a very limited picture of higher education accomplishments. The CLAST exam also got a critical appraisal. Some college people thought that measurement of basic skills proficiencies should be moved back to the end of high school. The Florida program review process got a more favorable assessment by higher education respondents.

One of the major institutional criticisms of Florida's assessment activities was that they had not led to increased funding. While total dollars have grown, the constant percentage share of total state revenues going to higher education was evidence to our respondents that the size of the budget is only marginally responsive to higher education needs, as revealed in the assessments.

Summary

Comprehensive state assessment of higher education will likely be initiated in more states than the eight to ten that are already involved. The particular forms that it takes--indicators, tests, program reviews, or multiple assessments--will evolve during the next few years with states adopting different approaches.

The key issue with comprehensive state assessment procedures is whether or not they will lead to improvement of the education of students and the research and service functions of the institutions. Comprehensive assessment of outcomes and effectiveness is promoted by governors and legislators; the impetus is primarily external to the academy. Assessment data will be used for summative evaluations; they may affect institutions' budgets, programs, and overall role and mission. Whether they will also be used for formative purposes of institutional self-improvement is difficult to judge at this early stage of their implementation. Institutions have enough program and substantive autonomy that they can probably meet most of the state goals by administrative adjustments without actually changing how students are taught or what they are taught. The possibility of playing "assessment games" that are similar to "budget games" is always present. The assessment game is to be able to report progress, whether it occurs or not. It may be easier to find ways to report improvement, than to engage in the more difficult task of making improvements.

The states where each institution is free to develop its own assessment procedures have a different problem. Institutions will develop their own measures of performance in relation to their own goals. It won't be possible to combine the varied institutional assessments into a statewide picture, and it will still be difficult to answer the question: "What do our college graduates know; how well is the state doing in higher education?"

Institutions that are motivated to improve themselves will develop a comprehensive assessment program, while institutions that are satisfied with their current situation will do as little as possible to meet state requirements, since they have no internal motivation to do more.

Regardless of the approach the state takes to evaluation, the State Higher Education Agency should be the leadership group in the evaluation process. To the extent that evaluations are used in state decision making and policy formation, and in shaping public perceptions of higher education, the complexity of the SHEA's job will be increased. In view of the political and economic influences illustrated in the states studied for this report, the success of SHEA evaluation activities will likely be determined by the agency's ability to integrate assessment data into planning and budgeting cycles.

Assessment processes will test the skills of state higher education executives who must be persuasive in presenting evaluation data to state officials, the media, and the legislature to reduce the chances of misinterpretation. The executive will also have to deal with the fairness, scope, and accuracy of any assessment process and results. It will take a diplomat's abilities to deal with state officials' desires for more assessment and with institutions that are sensitive about assessment information. College administrators will want to control any evaluation process that applies to their institutions while the governor and legislature are likely to want the procedure to be objective and independent, on the audit model.

At this stage it is too early to make a judgment about the impact of different approaches to state assessment of higher education. Will the decentralized approach lead to more institutional change and improvement than the more centralized efforts of states like Florida? Will the decentralized approaches be so diverse that they give no guidance to state planning and resource allocation? These questions will be examined in more depth in a later study.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Higher education systems and state higher education agencies are evaluated in a variety of ways. This report reviewed several types of evaluations in a survey of seven states, as summarized in Table One of Chapter I. While these seven states were not a statistically representative sample of the fifty states, they included examples of most of the evaluation activities currently being used to assess policies and programs. The following conclusions and recommendations undoubtedly reflect the authors' opinions and biases as well as the comments of respondents and state observers.

Different forms of evaluation have been applied at different levels of higher education systems. More importantly, to conduct narrow or unilateral evaluations without adequate consideration of many variables is often of limited value. To ensure that value is derived from the process, the various forms and levels of evaluation need to be brought together through careful design and cooperation. How to achieve that good fit is a complex issue demanding further study. The recommendations given here may help establish the importance and urgency of making the correct connections between evaluation approaches. In Chapter I, the four main conclusions were previewed in ascending order of importance and descending order of certainty. These are now given with justification derived from the intervening chapters.

SHEA Self-Study Evaluation

Formal periodic self-studies by state higher education agencies are not common. While virtually all colleges and universities use outside consultants to help them reexamine their purposes and programs on periodic cycles that are established by accrediting agencies, only Alabama among the fifty states has a similar process for its state board. A number of other SHEA's have had informal retreats to examine their own functioning, and some states have had more formal reviews with external consultants at critical periods in the agency's history. Given the state agency's important role in comprehensive planning and systematic program review, it may seem paradoxical that they do not apply the benefits of periodic self-assessment to their own operations.

One reason for the failure of most SHEA's to adopt periodic evaluation procedures is the newness of most of the coordinating agencies. The need for state planning and regulation of higher education has been recognized in most states only in the last

twenty-five years. The role and authority of these new agencies has been challenged in most states by either the institutions or the legislature or both! In a majority of states, there have been changes in the role or authority during the last ten or fifteen years sometimes accompanied by changes in personnel. In the unsettled political environment that exists for most SHEA's, evaluation can be seen as more of a threat than a help.

A second reason is that the SHEA is a "boundary" agency, one that works between the governor, legislature, and higher education institutions. The effectiveness of the SHEA is judged in the final analysis by the way the whole higher education system functions, and whether the state adopts policies which enhance the opportunities for citizens and the quality of their education. The SHEA is not fully in control of the system (even if it is a state governing board) but is dependent on actions of the legislature, institutional leaders, and the governor to formally adopt and implement state policy goals. A self-evaluation that looks merely at the inner workings of the SHEA does not help much in assessing the role of the SHEA in the effective performance of the higher education system in the state.

It is our belief that most of the SHEA's are mature enough to initiate a periodic self-evaluation process, and that the review of their activities by outside consultants as a part of the self-evaluation is likely to be more helpful than simply having a staff and board review of their own operations.

The self-evaluation needs to assess the way the SHEA performs its policy role in improving the state system of higher education and its policy role in assuring that the citizens have adequate higher education opportunities. This will involve more than the internal workings of the SHEA although these should certainly be examined. Assessment of the broader goals involves looking at the way the whole system works, and the role of the SHEA in the policy process. When the SHEA is examined in relation to the institutions, legislators, and the executive staff of the governor, it moves the process beyond self-evaluation, and opens it up to summative as well as formative judgments. If the state agency has an adversarial relationship with a major university or system of institutions, for example, the self-evaluation may open SHEA to criticism that damages its credibility. But the potential benefit to the state of subjecting the state policy process to scrutiny should outweigh the problems that such a review might create for the SHEA.

The SHEA should also consider the value to its long-run survival and improvement that might follow from it undertaking a self-evaluation and thereby having developed the first draft of criteria of evaluation which later summative processes might

incorporate or modify. It may not later be as threatening if the agency has made a pre-emptive effort.

One way to deal with the self-evaluation of the SHEA in the broader context would be to incorporate it into the planning process. The periodic review and update of the state's master plan could include a self-evaluation of the SHEA's role in dealing with the major policy issues that were included in the plan. This could help set the proper context for the evaluation which should look for the best way the state's higher education policy objectives can be advanced.

The self-evaluation ought to be set up on a regular cycle that allows the state system and the SHEA to be evaluated in "normal" circumstances. The more common incremental approach is to put off evaluation until a crisis arises that requires some action. Evaluations done in a crisis inevitably focus on the immediate solution of the particular crisis, and therefore overlook the broader issues and the long-term interests of the state in favor of an immediate answer to a problem. They sometimes move prematurely toward an agenda of restructuring and/or shuffling key personnel. Furthermore, reforms proposed in a context of crisis may be evaluated against the short-run criterion of what they do to "solve" the problem.

Our first recommendation is that SHEA's should initiate periodic self-evaluation of the effectiveness of their agency in dealing with the major policy issues in the state. There are several possible patterns for these reviews, but the use of objective external consultants is likely to make the reviews more useful as well as more credible.

State Performance Evaluation of the SHEA

A number of states have done performance audits or sunset reviews of the SHEA. Since over forty of the states now have performance audit programs and staffs, the potential exists for most of the states to do an audit of their SHEA. The performance audit process appeals to executive and legislative staff because it is objective. A self-evaluation can be self-serving; the audit process, by contrast, conforms to the accountability requirements that states are insisting that all public agencies meet.

Our review of performance audits indicated that they had major limitations as procedures for improving the state policy process in higher education.

Their first limitation was that they usually examined the SHEA narrowly without examining the broader state system in which it was functioning. The state agency could be doing things right

without doing the right things, and the performance audit is more likely to use the legal responsibilities of the SHEA as the criteria for evaluation than the policy objectives of the state.

The second limitation was that performance audits, especially sunset reviews, tended to focus more on whether the agency should be continued in its present form or not, than on the question of how the state-level functions of planning, resource allocation and evaluation could best be performed. It is harder to assess these broader issues, but they are the important questions.

A third criticism of performance audits is that they may be made by persons who do not have adequate knowledge of higher education to make complex and sensitive judgments about it. This assumes that performance audits should be based on peer judgment, and in the absence of clear and objective criteria, the performance audit will be largely judgmental. Our review found that some performance audits were based on a considerable effort to develop appropriate criteria and measures of performance, and others were primarily judgmental. The fear of insensitive and uninformed auditors was not justified in most of the audits we reviewed.

A final criticism is that performance audits were often politically motivated efforts to criticize an unpopular agency or to do an audit of an ineffective agency to improve the image of the audit process with the legislative oversight committee members. In such a process, even-handedness may be lost; criticisms are more welcome than praise. If the audit reveals weak performance, the justification for the audit process (and the audit staff) is strengthened. The political nature of who is selected to be audited was evident in several of the states visited, but this is more a criticism of the legislators who make these determinations than it is of the audit staff. Any evaluation process can be used for political purposes.

Our second recommendation to states is that the performance audit process is inadequate as an evaluation of SHEA's performance. Even when the evaluation is done well, it does not deal with the key issues that need to be examined. Our recommendation is not that the state agency avoid accountability for effective performance, but that another process be used to evaluate the SHEA's in the context of the functioning of the entire state system. The remaining recommendations suggest some structure for more productive evaluations.

Special Studies and Blue Ribbon Commissions

The most common form of evaluation of higher education has been the special study, done by a consultant group, a group of

distinguished citizens, a legislative committee, or by some combination of these. Even after development of statewide planning agencies in the sixties and seventies, special studies continued to be done, and they can be a useful form of evaluation, supplementing the studies and policy recommendations of the SHEA's.

Common situations in which special studies may be appropriate are:

1. When state authorities want an objective overview of the state system of higher education and the way the SHEA functions, they can appoint a citizens committee and/or employ outside expertise to do a review. California has a periodic review of its master plan approximately once each decade, using a citizen group and a special staff and consultants to examine the major policies guiding higher education. The California Master Plan Review recommends changes that align the state's higher education resources with the needs of the next decade. Other states have also used special commissions to look at the present performance and future directions of their higher education system, although they usually do this on an ad hoc rather than periodic basis.

2. When a broad policy issue or issues arise that involve(s) the jurisdiction and efforts of several different state groups, a special study group may be needed. Health professions education and teacher education are two examples where the SHEA will need to work with the State Health Department and State Education Department, respectively, in examining and developing recommendations.

3. If the issue of state-level governance structure needs to be examined, an impartial outside group will give more credibility and objectivity to the analysis than anything the SHEA might recommend about itself.

The work of special studies and blue ribbon commissions is often judged too narrowly on the extent to which their recommendations are subsequently adopted by the legislature. There are other criteria by which these studies can and should be evaluated. One is whether they successfully raise relevant issues for discussion, and whether their work contributes to the education of the public, the legislature, and other key policymakers about the nature of the issue and the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions. They also keep important problems on the public agenda so that the legislature and governor will deal with them. A third criterion for evaluating the work of commissions is their ability to bring together the key groups that can bring about a resolution of an issue.

When looked at against the first criterion, whether the special study's recommendations are subsequently adopted by the

legislature, the studies we reviewed had a mixed record. The best chance for legislative adoption probably occurs when a legislative committee or legislatively appointed committee does the study. Since legislators are partisan, the legislative committee may use the process to reach a short-run political accommodation or compromise, rather than examining the issue more objectively and developing recommendations that reflect the best long-term educational solution to the problem. When the legislature and governor jointly appoint a distinguished lay citizen committee, as was the case in the Florida and Colorado study commissions, the chance for legislative action is good. A group of distinguished citizens can bring a nonpartisan and more objective look to the issue than is likely with a study group made up primarily of legislators.

When examined in relation to the importance of the issues they raised and the contributions to the education of key policy makers about these issues, the blue ribbon commissions we looked at also have a mixed record. Consultants can be useful in raising the issues in a comprehensive way. A blue ribbon citizen group can be more effective in getting issues on the political agenda than a consultant group. Sometimes the blue ribbon committee can even have a second life after it makes its formal report which gives them time to push for adoption and implementation of recommendations. The combination of influential citizen members and outside consultants has more potential strength than either group by itself.

In summary, special study commissions can play a useful role in some situations and will probably be needed on special occasions even in states where the SHEA is an effective policy-oriented agency. In particular, we recommend the periodic use of a citizen committee and expert consultants to evaluate and make suggestions for improvement in the state higher education system, its policies, governance, and operation. If that review is part of the state planning process, as the California master plan review is, it can accomplish an important dual purpose on a periodic basis, probably every ten years or so. We think this would be a better approach to accountability than the performance audit or sunset review, but it should be conducted as a periodic review - a step-back look over a fairly long period - as opposed to a reflex action to a real or perceived crisis. It is the relationship of special commissions to other evaluations and to planning that will make the blue ribbon report most relevant and likely to be implemented.

Comprehensive State Planning and Evaluation

The recommendations we have made, including the value of periodic self-evaluation, the problems with performance audit, and the contribution of special study commissions, are based

primarily on our analysis of existing data and on professional judgment. Such evaluations can make a valuable contribution to the policy debate and decision making process, but they also have limitations which have been reviewed above. States have begun to look for accurate information on the outcomes of education and better information on the "results" the state is getting for its investment in higher education.

Therefore, states have begun to require more systematic on-going measurement and assessment in education to give evidence about the quality of education. States also want to assess whether reforms are bringing improvement to the system. Those states that have been the most interested and active in the reform of their educational systems have also been the states that have been most active in developing comprehensive assessment activities.

It takes several years to develop a comprehensive evaluation system for higher education and in most states these activities are either still under discussion or are in the developmental stage. Because most of the states we visited were still in the early development stages of their new state-level assessments, we did not examine this type of evaluation in depth at this time. Only Florida among the states we visited has a history of development of statewide tests, indicators of performance, state-directed program review, and other aspects of a comprehensive evaluation system. Florida's experience should prove useful to other states as they develop assessment programs. We propose to visit several states in the future, when they will have had time to implement some of their new procedures. The state role in comprehensive assessment varies from leaving the initiative with campuses and monitoring their procedures, to a very active role in setting indicators of progress, reviewing programs, and mandating statewide testing. Florida, Tennessee, New Jersey, and Missouri are examples of states that are developing comprehensive assessment systems, but they are not alike in what they are trying.

Useful information about program and institutional performance cannot be obtained very well without periodic systematic data collection. Ad hoc studies and commissions, and performance audits have to work with the available data, and can make limited contributions to the on-going planning, resource allocation, and management decisions which must be made to get sustained improvement in education. Systematic evaluation can provide performance information that will be most valuable at the institutional level, but some of that information is also important to state-level policy-making and resource allocation. The recent demands for micro-level assessment have generated concern about the use of data to shape budgets and missions, but successful connection of micro-level studies to ongoing macro-level planning and evaluation may prove to have the potential to

bring a sense of order, utility and sensitivity to evaluation procedures at all levels. While the states are getting more involved in comprehensive assessment programs, there are a number of problems that need exploration before this type of evaluation can fulfill its potential.

The development of comprehensive assessments can have both beneficial and harmful effects on higher education. Good information about higher education performance and program effectiveness has the potential to improve state policies and resource allocations, and it also has a potential for misuse. The potential for improvement depends a great deal on the way the new state role in this sensitive area is developed and implemented, and who has the responsibility for those functions.

We recommend that the State Higher Education Agency take a strong policy leadership role in helping the institutions and state officials to work together to develop an effective assessment process. Activities relating to student assessment at the campus level and institutional assessment at the state level should develop in coherent ways which are compatible with broader evaluation processes. The SHEA will have the complicated job of linking fragmented assessment activities with whatever macro-level statewide efforts are taking place. The institutions, with their individual perspectives on state issues, cannot do this; other state offices lack the necessary sensitivity to academic issues. Thus, whether taking the leadership in assessment or coordinating the separate institutional assessment activities, most SHEA's will occupy a key position. If there are risks in moving too fast in this emerging area, there are also risks in moving too slowly; and SHEA's should sense their responsibility to use both their brakes and their gas pedals to help their state arrive at a set of policies balanced to the needs and conditions of the state.

* * * *

We earlier noted that the four main recommendations were made in ascending order of importance and in descending order of our certainty. We now can explain those terms more fully.

The easiest recommendation to make was one which we offered with great certainty that some form of state board self-evaluation would be beneficial. But we also recognized the limited importance and application of this action in the total range of evaluation activities.

Somewhat more visible and important as an evaluation process would be the various forms of state performance audits or sunset

reviews. We felt quite certain that our conclusions regarding their limited effectiveness were correct.

Even more importance and attention is given to the many state studies using blue ribbon committees and/or out-of-state consultants, but our mixed assessment of the effectiveness of these patterns compelled us to offer them with less dogmatism than the previous two conclusions.

Finally, we noted explicitly the potentially most important process--the building of a comprehensive state assessment system and the leadership role of the state board in that process. We had not done substantial empirical field work on that topic, and the states attempting comprehensive evaluations are not ready for critical review. Therefore, we must offer that recommendation in a more speculative mode.

Others can react to these four recommendations to let us know where we have seen things correctly, and where we have erred!

Appendix A

ECS Surveys of Blue Ribbon Commissions and State Assessment Activities in Higher Education.

Boyer, C. M., Ewell, P. T., Finney, J. E., and Mingle, J. R. (1987). Assessment and Outcomes Measurement. A View from the States: Highlights of a new ECS Survey and Individual State Profiles (IPS-87-1). Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

This report includes findings from a 50-state survey conducted by mail and phone from January-February 1987. The findings show that two-thirds of the states have ordered assessment activities. State initiatives were categorized in the report as follows: mandated statewide testing programs, early intervention programs, encouraging institutional action, assessment within existing statewide mechanisms, and statewide monitoring of other outcomes. State profiles follow the narrative with contact persons listed.

McGuinness, A. C., Jr. (March, 1986). Major State Higher Education Studies 1980 to present. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

This listing includes major studies that emphasize all or most of the state's higher education system. Each state is included with the exception of Wyoming which does not have a large system of higher education. The studies are listed by type and include state board/agency statewide or master plans, state board/agency periodic or continuous planning, legislative committee studies, study commission reports, and state board/agency consultant reports.

Tolliver, S. (March, 1986). Summaries of States: Studies of Higher Education. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

This report summarizes studies conducted in nineteen states: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, and West Virginia. Information included in each state summary includes the membership/staff, the date, the issues covered, the recommendations of the study, and the current status.

Appendix B

Technical Advisory Committee Members

Patrick Callan
Associate Executive Director
Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80295

James Furman
Vice President
MacArthur Foundation
140 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60603

James Mingle
Executive Director
State Higher Education
Executive Officers Association
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 310
Denver, CO 80295

Lawrence Pettit
Chancellor
Southern Illinois University
Colyer Hall
Carbondale, IL 62901

Sheila Tolliver
Former Executive Assistant to the
Governor for Education
367 Dewey Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

Aims McGuinness
Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80295

REFERENCES

Academy for Educational Development. December, 1979. A Call to Action. Final report to the Joint Legislative and Executive Commission on Postsecondary Education. Washington, D.C. (Mimeo).

Academy for Educational Development. 1986. Assessment in American higher education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Academy for Educational Development. 1979. Support, performance, and protection of higher education in West Virginia. Washington, D.C.

Adelman, Clifford, (ed.) 1986. Assessment in American higher education. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Alabama. 1983. Challenge-obligation-opportunity, the imperative for excellence in higher education. Report of the Council of Twenty-one. Montgomery, AL: Commission on Higher Education.

Alabama Commission on Higher Education. 1975, 1979, 1983, 1987. Quadrennial Evaluations of the Alabama Council on Higher Education. Montgomery, AL: Commission on Higher Education.

Augenblick, Van de Water and Associates. February, 1986. Higher education in South Carolina, An agenda for the future. Denver, CO.

Barak, R.J. and R.O. Berdahl. 1978. State level academic program review. Denver, CO: Inservice Education Program, Education Commission of the States.

Barak, R.J. 1979. State level higher education program review. Boulder, CO: National Center for Education Statistics/State Higher Education Executive Offices.

Barak, R.J. 1983. "State Level Academic Program Review and Approval: 1983 Update." Denver, CO: Education Commissionn of the States. Mimeo.

Berdahl. R.O. 1977. State legislative program evaluation in higher education in J. Folger Ed. Increasing the public accountability of higher education. New Directions for Institutional Research, No 16.

Bowen and Glenny. 1984. Toward a new beginning: Balancing local control with state coordination and governance. (Washington).

Clark, B.R. 1983. The higher education system: Academic organization in cross-national perspective. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Colorado Higher Education Committee. January, 1985. Report to the Colorado General Assembly: Higher Education. Denver, CO: Legislative Council Research Publication No. 293.

Colorado State Auditor. July 1982. Report. Denver, CO.

Connecticut. April, 1977. Strengthening higher education in Connecticut. Hartford, CT: State audit report.

DiBiasio, D. 1986. Higher education under study: A comparative analysis of six statewide reports. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, February 20-23, 1986.

ECS. 1986. McGuinness, A.C., Jr. Major state higher education studies, 1980 to present. Denver, CO.

ECS. 1987. Boyer, C.M., P.T. Ewell, J.E. Finney, and J.R. Mingle. Assessment and outcomes measurement. A view from the states: Highlights of a new ECS survey and individual state profiles. (IPS-87-1). Denver, CO.

Ewell, P.T. August, 1986. "The state role in assessing college outcomes: Policy outcomes and Probable impacts" in Time for results: Supporting Works. Task Force on College Quality. Washington, D.C: National Governor's Association. 43-47.

Fincher, C., L. Jones, and J. Placek, (Eds.) January, 1986. Higher Education in Georgia Assessment Evaluation and Accreditation. Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Institute of Higher Education.

Finn, C. 1983. The drive for educational excellence: Moving toward a public consensus. Change. 15:3, 14-22.

Florida. 1980. Report and recommendations of the joint legislative and executive commission on postsecondary education. Tallahassee, FL. Mimeo.

Florida. 1982. Master plan for Florida postseconcary education. Tallahassee, FL: State Board of Education, PEPC.

Florida. 1983. Regents evaluative criteria on the Delivery System, 1983 and follow-ups: 1984-85. Gainesville, FL: State University System of Florida.

Florida. 1985. A path to excellence in public higher education in Florida. Tallahassee, FL: Regents Study Commission on Funding for Excellence.

Garland, P. and J. Hunter. 1987. Evolution of comprehensive state planning for higher education. Paper presented at the 1987 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, San Diego, CA.

Idaho. 1985. Ad hoc Committee on Higher Education (joint legislative interim committee) to examine state governance and community colleges.

Idaho. 1983. The future of higher education in Idaho. Denver CO: Education Commission of the States.

Idaho. 1983. Higher education in Idaho, A plan for the future. Boise, ID: Idaho Task Force on Higher Education.

Idaho. 1984. Evaluation Committee Report. Seattle, WA: Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

Idaho. 1986. Directions for higher education in Idaho: The next five years. Strategic Plan. Boise, ID: State of Idaho, State Board of Higher Education.

Johnson, J. and L. Marcus. 1986. Blue ribbon commissions and higher education, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Joint Legislative Executive Commission on Postsecondary Education. 1980. Report and recommendations of the joint legislative executive commission on postsecondary education.

Miller, J.L. 1985. Private communication to Robert O. Berdahl.

National Governor's Association Center for Research and Analysis. 1986. Time for results: The Governors' 1991 report on education. Washington, D.C.: National Governor's Association.

Nettles, M. March 2, 1987. The emergence of college outcome assessments. Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey State College Governing Boards Association. (Working Draft Paper 87-1).

Peterson, P.E. 1983. Did the education commissions say anything? Brookings Review, Winter 1983: 3-11.

Schmidtlein, F. 1983. "Comprehensive and incremental decision paradigms and their implications for educational planning. in Copa, G.H. and Moss, J. (Eds.) Planning and vocational education. New York: McGraw-Hill. 48-80.

Secretary's Study Group on American Education. 1983. A nation at risk. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

South Carolina. 1978. Legislative audit council report. Management and operational review of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. Columbia, SC.

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education. 1987. The cutting edge: Higher education's initiatives for excellence. Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Commission.

South Carolina master plan for higher education. 1980. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Commission.

State University System of Florida. December 1985. Florida's progress toward excellence in education in the state university's system. Tallahassee: State University System.

State University System of Florida. April 1986. Report on the improvement of undergraduate education in English, Math, and foreign language courses and establishment of teaching awards. Tallahassee: State University System. Mimeo.

State of Tennessee. July 1, 1987. Performance funding standards for public colleges and universities. Nashville: Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Mimeo.

Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. 1984. Involvement in Learning. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Subcommittee on Academic Degree Program Assessment. June 1987. Academic degree program assessment in the university system of Georgia: A tentative statement of rationale, purposes, and procedures. Atkutin, GA: Board of Regents of the Georgia University System.

Sunset Review Committee on the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. June, 1982. Sunset Review. Denver, CO.

Tolliver, S. March, 1986. Summaries of states: Studies of higher education. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Washington. 1984. Sunset program and fiscal review of the council on postsecondary education. Olympia, WA: Legislative Project Bureau.

Washington. December 12, 1984. Final Report to the Washington State Legislature. Olympia, WA: Washington Joint Legislative Advisory Committee on Higher Education Governance, Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid (known as the Rinehart Committee). Mimeo.

Washington. January 21, 1985. Program and fiscal review of council on postsecondary education. Olympia, WA:

Legislatiave Budget Committee. Report No. 1, 85-2.

Washington. January, 1985. Report of the study committee on coordination in higher education. Olympia, WA: Study Committee on Coordination in Higher Education, Representative Helen Somers, Chair.

Washington. 1985. The paramount duty. Olympia, WA: Citizens' Committee of the House and the Senate.

West Virginia. June, 1984. Performance audit. Charleston, WV: Legislative Auditor's Office.

West Virginia. 1987. Agenda for Action: Master Plan 1985-90. Charleston, WV: West Virginia Board of Regents.

West Virginia. 1987. Study Report. Charleston, WV: Higher Education Study Commission.